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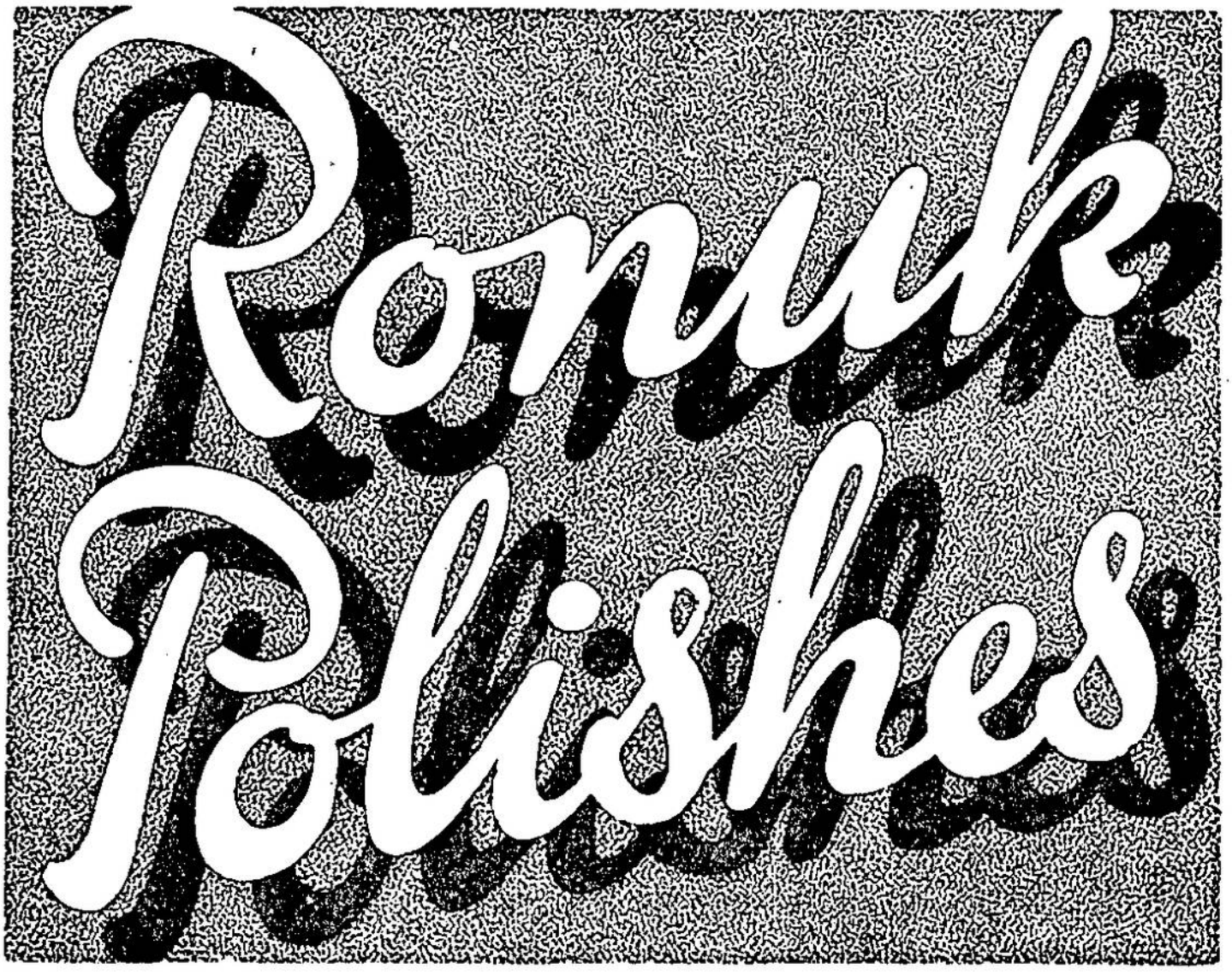

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ARGOSY

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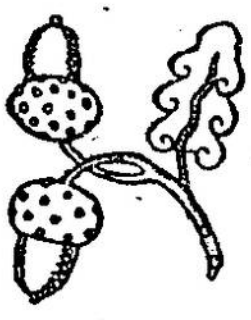
Night Under the Stars

A GREY pearly shadow filled the glen; objects at a little distance grew indistinct and melted bafflingly into each other; and the darkness was rising steadily like an exhalation.

Before I had fed Modestine and arranged my sack, three stars were already brightly shining, and the others were beginning dimly to appear. I slipped down to the river, which looked very black among its rocks, to fill my can; and dined with a good appetite in the dark, for I scrupled to light a lantern while so near a house. The moon, which I had seen, a pallid crescent, all afternoon, faintly illuminated the summit of the hills, but not a ray fell into the bottom of the glen where I was lying. The oak rose before me like a pillar of darkness; and overhead the stars were set in the face of the night.

No one knows the stars who has not slept, as the French happily put it, *à la belle étoile*. He may know all their names and distances and magnitudes, and yet be ignorant of what alone concerns mankind, their influence on the mind. These same far-away worlds, sprinkled like tapers or shaken together like a diamond dust upon the sky, had looked not otherwise to Roland or Cavalier, when they had "no other tent but the sky, and no other bed than my mother earth."

R. L. STEVENSON, *Travels With a Donkey*



EVENING IN IRELAND

"The odds are against you," he said "and it's fair enough"

by BRYAN MacMAHON

THE mountains were thrown higgledy piggledy into the distance, where the sea was. The white dusty road wound around the flank of the near valley, and fell gracefully away to the one-arched bridge below. Among the tufted oaks on the Pass the church lurked. A cluster of thatched houses crouched about it. Bird song had shrivelled and died.

Down the road came the old priest. He was walking slowly. He was a sandy grey man with lush eyebrows. His lips moved in prayer as his eyes found and lost the words in the breviary. From time to time his eyes wandered over the breviary and over the spectacles down the long curve of the white road.

A young man came upwards from the bridge. On his back he carried a sack. There was a hole in the sack and a turkey's head protruded into the sunlight. The priest squeezed up his eyes and saw the man clearly. At the same time the young man spied the priest. He ceased his whistling and threw aside his slouch. The sack was jerked one notch higher on his shoulder. He crossed to the road margin opposite to that on which the priest was walking. The priest and the man came closer and closer. The man pulled the visor of his cap down over his eyes and tried to sneak past. Unaccountably the priest was on the road before him. The young man tipped his cap with a forefinger. He mumbled something.

The priest screwed up his face a few times. This was designed to wring the sun out of his features. Also to intimidate the young man. The priest said, with a soft harshness : " Who have I ? "

" Dick Lynch, Father."

" Are you a son of Dick the River or of Dick the White Stile ? "

" Dick the River, Father."

" What have you in the sack ? "

" A turkey hen, Father."

" Where are you taking her ? "

A pause. A glint. A sudden spurt of brave speech. " To the cock, Father."

The priest eyed the young man narrowly. The young man held his face to a sterling gravity as the priest walked all around him.

The turkey hen and the priest looked at one another. The bird closed her eyes so that they were two white discs. She seemed grotesquely to be mimicking a sleeping doll.

The priest returned and faced the young man. "H'm!" he said again. Then: "Are you married?"

"No, Father."

"I wouldn't doubt you! How many in family are ye?"

"Six, Father."

"What way are ye divided?"

"Four girls and two boys, Father."

"Are the girls older or younger than you?"

"The three eldest are girls, Father. The last girl is younger than me."

"Any of them married?"

"No, Father."

"Tck! Tck! Tck! That's right! Mate yeer turkeys while ye yawn yeerselves. Keep on that way, let ye, until ye're tall grey curmudgeons fit for nothing else but to stone a braddy cow out of a garden. Tck! Is it blind ye are? Will ye look at the brambles drooping with heavy blackberries?"

The young man eyed the blackberries.

"Did you ever hear what the Almighty God said to Adam and Eve?"

"I forget, Father."

"I'd engage but you would! You wouldn't forget the ballad of "Big Mick's Cow"! What kind of people are ye at all? Do ye want to have me, or the man that comes after me here, parsing the parables to the red varnish of the pews or talking to himself about the road from Jericho to Jerusalem? Ay! and the thatch mouldering on the roofs around the house of God." A pause for breath. Then: "Your eldest sister—what name have ye on her?"

"Pidge, Father."

"Is she the one that has the black hair like this?" The priest made a gesture indicative of unusual coiffure.

"Yes, Father."

"Shoving on into years, she is. Isn't she?"

"She is, Father."

"She'll never see thirty again?"

"She won't, Father."

"Is she keeping company with anyone?"

"Not to my knowledge, Father."

"H'm! Do you know Denis Sullivan of Parkeen?"

"Denisheen the Dog, is it, Father?"

"Dog! Dog! Dog! Dog! What dog, man?"

"He have a dog, Father, a black and white dog."

" I'm asking if you know him ? "
" I do, Father."
" Nine cows he has ? "
" Yes, Father."
" Lovely ground. In good heart. Tucks of running water."
" Ay, Father."
" Enough fowl to blacken the air ? "
" Yes, Father."
" A tub trap and a roan pony ? "
" He has so, Father."
" And a Department bull ? "

The farmer became paramount in the young man. " Let me tell you something, Father. That same bull is gettin' poorly. He's throwing the world and all of white calves."

The priest bridled up. "And what signifies that ? Won't a tuppenny stamp and a small bit of writing swap him ? When he's transferred, won't some other parish beside ours breed the pale delicate cattle ? Answer me out ! "

Meekly, conquered, " That's true, Father."

" Come now, wouldn't Denisheen the Dog, as you call him, suit your sister, Pidge ? "

" He might, Father."

" Wouldn't you do an act of charity and put it into her head ? "

The young man remained silent.

" Will you tell it to your father, itself ? "
" I will indeed, Father."
" Tell him to be doing his duty by ye, will you ? "
" I will, Father."
" Tell him that I said if he doesn't look after ye, who will ? "
" That's right, Father."
" That's right ! That's right ! That's right ! " the priest said peevishly. " Can ye do anything but agree with me ? "

After a moment of irresolute silence, he said brightly : " There's a spark in you. You showed it when you denounced the bull."

The young man smiled under the peak of his cap. The turkey hen made a noise that sounded like " *Pewtk !* "

The priest said : " Were you at Conway's, the gathering house, on Wednesday night ? "

Reluctantly, " I was, Father."
" Inside or out ? "
" Mostly outside, Father."
" Had ye a raffle ? "
" There was a raffle, Father, but I was gone home."
" Oho, you were, you model ! H'm ! What music had ye ? "
" I couldn't get a glimpse of the musicianers, Father. I'd say

it was a pair from away up Reesk direction."

Silence. The pair looked at one another.

The priest's mouth was giving him a great deal of trouble. All the while his eyes transfixed and intimidated the young man. When he had gained the mastery over his lips he said in a low voice: "Goodbye, son!"

"Goodbye, Father!"

The young man strode steadily up the road. After moving uphill for a little distance he turned his head quickly. His mouth was fully open in rustic laughter. But he was caught red-handed for the priest had turned, too, and was standing quietly, looking at him over his glasses.

The young man wiped the smile from his face.

"Come back here!" the priest said, sternly.

Embarrassed, Dick Lynch shuffled back.

"Ha!" the priest began. "Making game of your pastor, you are! What's in your mind is written plainly on your face. Isn't that a nice carry-on for a Sunday evening?"

The young man shifted his weight from one boot to the other.

The priest was relentless. "I know you, me hayro!" he said. He began to mimic himself and the boy. "*What have you in the sack, son?*"

"*A turkey-hen, Father.*"

"*And where are you taking her?*"

"*To the cock, Father.*"

The priest's voice was poised between banter and reproof. Then, his mimicry finished, he said: "You'll swing, you scoundrel, won't you?"

"I will, Father." Dick Lynch for good measure of agreement added a small smile, which the priest straightaway guillotined.

"*Pewtk!*" said the turkey.

Again the priest was at his inevitable mimicry. "*I will, Father! I will, Father!*" His voice climbed. "Now, a fair warning I'm giving you. You know my old housekeeper?"

"I do, Father."

"Her sight is going and her wits are wandering. But her hearing is unimpaired! She hears the grass growing in this parish, doesn't she?" The priest's voice was threatening: "I'm giving you timely notice. If 'tis a thing she brings home a funny story about myself and a turkey-hen I'll . . . I'll . . ."

A remote look on the young man's face made the priest turn to follow the other's gaze. Down on the bridge in the valley he saw what the young man was looking at with such intensity: a tall heavy man and a young red-haired girl. The man was slightly

behind the girl and talking over her shoulder. Whatever it was he was saying was sending her off into peals of young laughter. Times there were when the girl swung away from the heavy man, but always she returned to him as if controlled by a strong elastic band.

" Who's he ? " asked the priest. The tone of his voice implied that he and the young man were conspirators.

The young man was silent. He looked over-long at the pair on the bridge. Over-quietly, he said : " Meehan, Father."

" Ho-ho ! " said the priest. " So this is Meehan, the Prince of Philanderers ! Into God's net the rascal is cast at last. You know him, don't you ? "

Evenly : " I've heard tell of him, Father."

" Of course you have ! The stones of the road have heard of his prowess as a philanderer. First he was going with a daughter of Rory Gibbons ; then if my memory doesn't mislead me it was the jet-black daughter of Mike McLoughlin of Creveen he was walking-out. And after that he knocked a turn out of the young widow-woman who has a public house at Baurscoob Cross-roads. What's this her name is, son ? "

" Mrs. Hanafin, Father."

" Ay ! That's it ! Who's the lassie he has with him now ? "

" Mary Teresa O'Donnell, Father."

The priest looked sharply at the young man. All the wisdom of an old church and all its humanity were patent in his eyes. His age had suddenly been sloughed. Now he was sharper than sharp. " Tell me," he said, as if inserting a knife-blade into a crevice, " this Mary Teresa O'Donnell, was she at the gathering-house on Wednesday ? "

" She was, Father."

" Did you dance with her ? "

" I did, Father."

" You danced with no one else ? "

" No, Father." The young man was replying as from a trance.

" Tell me, son, did you convey her home ? "

" No, Father."

" Did she go home with Meehan ? "

Over-sharply the young man said : " It's no business of mine who she went home with."

The priest and the young man fell silent. They stood watching the antics of the pair below them. Then the boy turned bitterly and made as if to walk away uphill. The priest called to him softly.

" A question I want to ask you," he said. " I'm going on down there. I'll be meeting Meehan. Yes or no, son, will I roast him ? "

" That's up to yourself, Father."

"It's not up to myself! It's up to you, only that a foolish honour has you throttled. Now, now, no hole-and-corner play! As a representative of the Almighty God, I'm asking you a straight question. Soon I'll be on the bridge. It's easy for me to pass Meehán by with a civil dodderin' word. It's just as easy for me to do the other thing. For the last time, yes or no, will I roast Meehan the Philanderer? He's wily; you're young. The odds are against you. As play goes, it's fair enough!"

The boy looked down. He was tempted. His lips and eyes were taken with whimsy, then with a smiling hardness.

"You might as well, Father," he said softly.

"Do you think that I have it in me to roast him?"

The smile became a true laugh. "Certain sure I am of it, Father."

"Right! Now suppose I redden and grill Meehan, will you play square with this O'Donnell girl?"

In a low voice: "I will, Father."

"You've thought the matter over?"

"I've thought of little else, Father."

"Good! There'll be none of this Kathleen Mavourneen courtship—it may be for years and it may be for ever?"

"No, Father."

"No putting of the holy day on the long finger?"

"No, Father."

"The money question, is that settled?"

A gush of talk from the young man. "That was threshed out between us, Father. There's no difficulty there. I have three hundred pounds in dry cash in my own name. She has seven hundred pounds coming to her. Cahillane's holding is on the walls. It will be bought for seven hundred and fifty. What's left will stock the land."

"That's settled so, son?"

"Settled it is, Father."

"You give me your word?"

"My word, Father."

"God bless you, son."

"And you, Father."

The young man turned, hitched his sack higher on his back and strode uphill to mate the turkey. The priest braced himself and strode downhill to mate the young man. The heavy sun slid down the heavens to where the mountains waited in the far west. Striding freely into the upland the young man laughed. He had just thought of what God had said to Adam and Eve. How could he have forgotten it? It was: "Go forth, increase and multiply, and fill the earth."

TORO

It was rite impelled them to it, a rite that knew no mercy

by ROBERT CARSE

JUAN PEREZ sensed something was wrong with the bulls when he came up out of the fire-room at midnight. The ship was alternately pitching and rolling with a hard, jerky movement, and he wasn't surprised when Harry, one of the sailors on watch, walked into the pantry and told him, " The biggest of the lot has busted loose. You should see the mate running around down there in Number Two hold with that black chunk of murder chasing him."

It had been Juan's intention to make a mug of tea, then turn in for the night. He had also promised himself, leaving Barcelona, that he would have nothing to do with bulls, no matter what happened. But he slid the mug into the sink and glanced sharply at Harry.

" Those men should know how to take care of it," he said, meaning the group of handlers who had come aboard with the bulls in Spain.

" They can't even take care of themselves," Harry said. "They're all seasick, laid out flat. The mate has a gun and the Old Man just told him to go ahead and shoot the bull."

Juan nodded and stepped past Harry into the passage. He went striding along it and the foredeck. Spray slatted against him, soaked his thin cotton singlet and dungarees. He was hardly aware of it. He was trying to decide what he should do about the bull.

He hadn't gone ashore while the ship was in Barcelona, because he believed that Spain belonged to the past for him and he wanted nothing more to do with it. His people were Spaniards and he'd been born in Andalusia. But in the Civil War the family had suffered tragedy, and now he was a citizen of the United States, had a wife and children in Hoboken, New Jersey. The bulls were also a part of the past, so he had stayed away from them since they were aboard.

Still, as he crouched at the leeward corner of Number Two hold and stared down, he knew that he was fascinated by the bulls.

After all, he recalled, he had spent most of his youth in the company of animals like these. His father had been a famous herdsman and trainer, taught him about bulls from the time he was just big enough to walk.

Juan gazed narrow-eyed through the hatch opening at the big black Miura bull in the lower hold. It stood roaring beside the row of stalls that had been built for it and the other beasts. The mate walked towards it, the revolver in his hand. Juan shouted, and the sound was louder than the sounds from below. The mate stopped, looked up at him. That was what he wanted, Juan suddenly realized. He had to get into the hold before the mate shot the bull.

" Mister Gagan," he said to the mate when he was down off the ladder. Emotion badly disturbed his grammar, but he spoke fast : " Please not to shoot. This bull is good, worth very much dollars."

" This bull," the mate began, and broke into a stream of highly profane invectives which was lost on Juan. He was watching the bull at the far end of the hold. It stood horns and head down, deeply rumbling, nervously rucking the hay on the deck with its small, sharp hoofs. The other three were still secure in their stalls, and the group of handlers, drab-faced with seasickness, hunched barricaded behind a pile of planks.

The mate grabbed Juan by the shoulder, swung him around. " Get out of here," he said. " I have my orders from the Old Man."

" You shoot a bull like that, one of the Miura breed ? " Juan smiled, glancing up into the mate's face. " But no, mister."

The mate was a big man, and he had been very close to death. His khaki coat was ripped along the shoulder where the bull had almost gored him ; he was made angry by the knowledge that he was frightened. Now this skinny little fireman was telling him what to do.

He stuck the revolver in his belt and lifted Juan bodily up on to the ladder. " Climb out of here," he said roughly, " before your ribs are stove in."

" You've got to trust me, mister," Juan said. Then he jumped, and he was between the mate and the bull. He moved forward slowly after that, feeling the shudder of the ship under him and thinking only very briefly of Ludmilla and the kids in Hoboken.

Memory of his father held him. He had thought of his father more and more in the last few days as the ship headed from Spain on her course to South America. The bulls had done it. The sight of this big fellow brought him right back to the Isla Menor and the yellow-flowered plain beside the Guadalquivir.

" But make sense here, stupid," Juan told himself. " This is

a tough bull. Father would be ashamed to see you being so careless. Study your animal. Be sure you know how you're going to work him."

The light was from overhead, and quite bright. He could see the bull clearly. It was of the pure Miura breed, tremendously heavy in the forequarters and neck; the thick, black coat shining, rippling, as the great muscles gathered. Beneath the sweep of the eighteen-inch horns the eyes seemed shadowed, hidden. But they were very keen, watching him with a fierce and steady concentration. The hindquarters were lowering a bit; the long tail swung from side to side. Juan felt the familiar tightening of nerves through his stomach. The bull knew him as the opponent it must meet.

The moment of decision was almost here.

Broken prodding poles and coils of line were strewn amidst the hay. Juan disregarded them. He came within ten feet of the bull before he found what he needed. The blanket was of stiff felt, much too clumsy for his purpose, but there was no time left.

The black-shining Miura made dim, short, snorting noises. The horns were lifting. It was set to charge.

Juan recalled what his father had taught him years ago. "Go in slow and come out fast," his father had said. "But make the bull know who you are right away. One of you must be master."

"*Na-na-na toro!*" Juan cried, and brought his feet solidly beneath him. The bull kicked the hay back, snorted once more, and charged. Juan marked the horns and waited for the upward lurch of the ship before he swept the blanket out and away from his body.

This had to be the time, he realized. Now he hadn't enough room here. If he had to pass the bull again, he'd probably get killed.

But the bull took the blanket, sprang past with a wide, ragged fragment on a horn tip. Juan shook the splatter of frothy lather from his face. Breath seared through his throat. He felt in his wrists the terrible force of the bull. The lurch of the ship had sent the bull off balance and slung it partly sideways. The horns clashed against the thick timber of a stall with awful, stunning impact. A moaning grunt came from the bull. It rested motionless and slack.

"Come on," Juan said in a hoarse voice.

The foreman of the handlers and two of the other men were out from behind their pile of planks. The foreman carried a goad and the mate was running forward with a coil of strong line.

"Take him," Juan told them. "He's yours."

The foreman didn't answer. He helped Gagan slip half hitches around the sweat-glistening black hocks. Then with the bull flung over in its stall, he looked at Juan. His eyes were narrowed and there was a white line along his upper lip. "You must be from Andalusia, man," he said. "Only in Andalusia do they learn such as you know."

"Stow the talk," Gagan said, angered because he hadn't subdued the bull himself. "Now get out of here, Perez."

But the foreman took Juan by both arms. "Perez," he said. "From the Isla Menor?"

"That's right," Juan said, grinning.

"Then your father was boss herdsman for the Marquis de Fallada," the foreman said.

"That's right, too," Juan said. Pride was rising in him now, and the gates of memory were broad. "My father served on the ranch for thirty years. We raised the black ones like these here."

"I know," the foreman said almost reverently. "Man, I have often heard." He moved quickly aside, came back bearing a leather wine sack. "To us." He held it out to Juan. "And to your father."

Juan was watching Gagan. "You, sir?" he asked, and lifted the wine sack.

Gagan struck it from his hand. "I gave you an order," he said in a harsh voice. "I told you to get out of here."

"You do wrong," Juan said, the rage thudding up into his brain. "You should get out, and let real men be with the bulls."

He regretted it immediately he had said the words. Ludmilla wouldn't like him for it; she had warned him often about his temper. Mister Gagan was the chief mate and a good officer, and he had done just as well down here as any of the professional handlers. To talk to Gagan so was to make a bad insult. But the wine sack had been offered in friendship. It held the real *manzanilla* wine.

"I'll see you later, Perez," Gagan said, his face contorted and his hand shaking. "You're lucky I don't have you logged."

"Yes, sir," Juan said. He picked up the wine sack and had a long, slow drink.

When he finished it, Gagan was gone.

The foreman and the handlers sat down, formed a circle on the deck. They made Juan squat in the middle and they passed him the wine sack each time one of them had a drink. Little by little, they started him talking, and he told them of the Isla Menor, of the bulls his father had raised and trained.

Before, he had been unhappy that the ship was bound for

South America. With Puerto Ysidro on the north coast as her port of call, it meant weeks until she was back in New York and he could be with Ludmilla and the kids. But now the memories erased that unhappiness. He was glad to talk of them and of the running of the bulls in the spring.

His father wore his old-fashioned Andalusian plainsman's hat with the high crown and stiff brim. The jacket was also of the old style—short, close—the big flannel sash wound tight beneath around the waist. Some of the city people who came out with the Marquis to the ranch smiled when they saw his father's costume. They were amused by the battered leather leggings he wore and the way he rode into the corral on piebald Capataz. But it was because they were used to the fancy manners of the regular bullfighters, although his father was already a legend in the Isla Menor and most of Andalusia.

The smiles stopped when the bulls were led in for testing. His father ran each bull the length of the corral. He paced beside them on Capataz, and he tempted them, calling harshly, prodding them with the ten-foot-long goad.

Capataz had to turn very fast. Most of the bulls were, by instinct, the charging, killing kind. But his father knew Capataz like he knew his right hand; it seemed, as you watched, as though horse and man could never get harmed. But the bullfight managers, the ring owners and dealers seated beside the Marquis stood up and cheered and clapped. They kept the Marquis's secretary busy taking down the orders for the bulls they wanted. Here were the real ones, they admitted, and price didn't matter.

He stayed outside during all that day as his father ran the bulls. His own job was to help bring the animals to the outer corral. But the real sport for him was in the far pastures where he and the other boys could work alone with the bulls.

There they often dismounted and took off their jackets, went in against the yearling calves, sometimes the burly, already tough two- and three-year-olds. Once he had been nearly gored, at that, and he recalled lying flat on his back, very suddenly finding the sky over him. The bitter taste of fear came to his mouth and his stomach muscles flexed in memory.

The other boys had saved him, and he had sprung up, sprinted back to his horse. But his right thigh bore a surface gash several inches long, and that night at home his mother had discovered it. She had called his father in; there had been talk of a beating.

Instead, his father smiled. He took down the guitar from the wall pegs, went to sit on the doorstep in the pale-reaching dusk. "Sit here, Juanito," his father whispered to him, as though they were both boys together. "Next time, take more care in the

pasture. 'The three-year-olds are still too big for you."

Then his father started to play. And his mother came from the kitchen, drawn by the music, as his father had known she would be. She carried a bowl of black olives in a saucer of salt, and in the bodice of her dress her castanets were hidden.

The music changed for her singing and the accompaniment of the castanets. There were moments when his mother played alone. He was motionless as he listened, lost in the beauty of the music and his inexpressible love for these, his parents . . .

Juan blinked around at the bull handlers and grinned. " I've drunk too much and talked too much, friends," he said. " My thanks for the wine, and more for the listening.'

" It's as nothing," the foreman said. He and the others solemnly shook hands with Juan. " You did our work for us. But if the mate tries to give you any trouble—" The foreman made a delicate, quick gesture toward his waist sash, and Juan noticed the haft of the knife.

" But no," Juan said. He shook his head. " The mate has no reason for that. It will be forgotten. Now, good night." . . .

He found, though, on the slant south, that Gagan hadn't forgotten. From the saloon messman he heard how the Captain and the other officers had made a joke out of the incident with the bull. They mocked Gagan at mealtime, made snorting sounds and stuck their fingers up to their foreheads in imitation of horns. If a pint-size fireman could handle the bull, they wanted to know, what was wrong with the chief mate ?

Juan was troubled by that. He was several times on the point of telling Gagan that he was sorry to have caused the other embarrassment. But when he met Gagan around on deck, his own embarrassment became so great he couldn't speak. Time is best, he thought. Let time take care of it.

But down in Puerto Ysidro, when the ship went in to the dock, Juan gathered with almost the entire crew to see the bulls go over the side. A number of the officers were close to him in the crowd of men, and among them was Gagan. He heard the laughter and the mocking remarks of the officers as the bull that had broken loose was hoisted up from the hold.

" There it goes, Gagan," the chief engineer said. " Now's your chance. Get a topping maul and beat its brains out. But why don't you jump on first, and take a ride down to the dock ? "

" At least, wave your shirt," the radio operator told Gagan. " Make like the fireman did down in the hold."

Juan started to move away from the group. These men were all officers, and if they wanted to joke with one another, that was

their business, not his. But Gagan had seen him. The big man stretched out his hand and held him still.

" Just a minute," Gagan said. " You're the fellow with all the answers. What chance do you think your tough bull will have in the ring ? "

Juan shrugged, his temper under full control. He understood Gagan's purpose, if not the question. Gagan was sore, and had reason to be ; he had been teased too much. It was Gagan's idea to get out from under now, let him take the jeering talk. But the question still had to be answered.

" The bulls have been brought out for breeding," he said slowly to Gagan. " They aren't meant for the fights."

Gagan grinned. He nodded towards a flashily dressed man standing on the dock. " That's the new owner. He told me that he's going to put them in the ring as soon as they're rested from the trip. They need a rest. Any good bull-fighter could kill the lot with his feet lashed in a sack."

" So ? " Juan said as the crew began to laugh and jostle closer. " Well, I don't think the same you do, mister. The big one, the one I—" He forced his voice to break short. He was beginning to brag, he realized, and he was also losing his temper. Gagan was getting back at him fast. This was just what the mate wanted.

" Go ahead, Perez. You interrupted yourself." Gagan let his fingers grip harder into Juan's shoulder. " Tell us about the bulls, and your own pet in particular."

Juan looked around him, hoping that somebody else would speak, stop this hot, hard rush of tension between him and Gagan. But the men rested silent. They stared intently at him and the mate. Juan turned sideways for an instant. The bull he had subdued was being swung out to the dock. Its bellow was a great, fine sound of challenge.

He felt a sudden and profound sense of admiration for the bull. Somehow, since the night he had gone down in the hold, he had been pleased by the thought that the bull wouldn't be sent to death in the ring. He had imagined it running free over the wide highland pasture of this country, much as the stud animals had done on the Isla Menor. To meet the steel, to be hacked down clumsily by some second-rate fighter wasn't right. The vision of the bull in the ring like that shocked and infuriated him.

" These fighters here," he told Gagan, his caution almost gone, " they're not good enough. A bull of his breed—the real Miura—will chase them fast."

Gagan said, " Maybe you want to make a bet that your bull can win in the ring. You talk a lot. Let's have some money behind the talk."

Juan didn't think clearly before he answered; he didn't even count. The blood pulsed too fiercely in his veins and all of his pride was aroused, aflame.

"I bet you two months' pay," he said. "Two months' pay that the Miura goes in the ring and wins, comes out alive. You take that, mister, or do you want more?"

Lines deepened at the corners of Gagan's eyes. He slapped Juan hard on the back and held out his hand. "A bet," he said. "But make it a flat five hundred dollars. The chief, here, will hold the money whenever you get it up."

"I think you're both crazy," the chief engineer grunted. "Still, if that's how you want it, I'll hold your money. The ship's coming back next trip. Maybe we can go and see your bull fight in the ring."

"Yes, sir," Juan said dully, the recognition just beginning to come in upon him of what five hundred dollars meant. If he lost it, Ludmilla and the kids would starve. "Stupid," he told himself as he pushed through the crowd. "The mate trapped you as easy as you'd catch a rabbit. But you walked right into the trap and asked him to pull it shut."

He almost told Ludmilla about the bet while the ship was in New York, but he did not want to worry her.

Anyhow, he reassured himself, it was long past the time where the bet could be changed. Even if he got out of it, the bet would go on. Almost every man in the ship had a part of it, and practically all the money he'd turned over to the chief engineer had been offered him by members of the crew! About half of them, having heard of his family background and what he had done in the hold, had the firm idea he was right. The rest of them, of course, had lined up with Gagan against the bull. "So don't worry your woman," Juan decided. "Shut up, and hope that the bull meets the worst bunch of fighters in South America."

Out to sea on the way to Puerto Ysidro again, the radio operator and everybody who owned a set listened to the South American broadcasts for news of the Miura bull. A surprising number of bullfight authorities also developed among the crew. Joe the Greek, the moustached carpenter, who had seen fights in Panama and Peru, gave exhibitions on the main deck with an ordinary seaman as the bull. The radio operator was involved in paying for a home on Long Island, and rapidly organized a fight lottery for all who had a dollar to buy a ticket. Juan's usual good nature disappeared; he became morose, taciturn, far more worried than he wanted to admit. The day the broadcast at last gave news of the bull, he ran leaping up the ladders to the radio shack to listen.

Owing to the lottery, he was a special guest of the operator. He sat with the sweat trickling down his legs, while across from him Gagan leaned against the doorjamb, seemingly very calm. The announcer said :

" In an effort to better the quality of local bullfighting, a famous strain of Spanish bulls; the Miuras of Andalusia, have recently been introduced. Four have been brought into this country. Fighters appearing on the season's card at Puerto Ysidro will be given the opportunity to show their utmost skill. On the first Sunday of the month one of these Miuras will be presented to the crowd along with the best of the local breeds.

"This particular bull is the animal which, while being transported from Spain, broke loose from its stall and endangered the lives of several men. Other Miura bulls will follow the big black killer later in the season."

The radio operator flicked over the dial and winked at Juan. " We'll be in port in time for the fight. How would you like to take me on for a little side bet of a hundred dollars, Mr. Gagan ? "

A flush of colour rose up the heavy column of Gagan's throat. " You haven't got that much," he scoffed.

But the Captain was suddenly in the shack from the bridge wing. " Enough of this," the Captain said, flat-voiced. " The whole ship has gone bull-crazy. Go below, Perez. I don't want any more bets made, and if I find any man doing it I'll log him hard."

" Yes, sir," Juan said.

He started for the door, but behind him he could hear the Captain telling the operator, " Send a message in my name to the agent at Ysidro. Have him get the best seats being sold for the fight. Make it enough for the entire crew. We'd better see that thing or we'll all go nuts."

The Miura was the fourth bull to enter the ring. Pepe, the senior fighter, a tough, bow-legged Mexican, met him. In contrast to the local bulls that had been fought before, the Miura seemed to be of an almost completely different species.

Juan sprang to his feet from where he sat flanked by the Captain and the chief engineer, Gagan just beyond. He was dressed in a neat gabardine suit, but he wore the little blue woollen beret he had cherished ever since leaving Spain. His lungs expanded taut with the desire to shout. But he made no sound, and a strange silence was upon the crowd.

The Miura held them. They were fascinated by the bull. It came out, running at an easy canter, to the centre of the sunlit ring. Juan let his breath go in a rasping exhalation. Back on the Isla

Menor, he knew, there never had been a finer beast. This was what the ancient Mediterranean people had worshipped, and the Cid had fought against on horseback after he'd defeated the Moorish chiefs. The bull was magnificent and terrible; in the vast neck muscles, the reddish little eyes and the sweep of the spikelike horns was death itself.

Pepe and his capeworkers came forward to engage it with extreme care, walking rigidly, stiff-armed. Juan laughed a bit, deep in his throat. He sat down and felt the tension leave his body. "You were right," he told himself. "No fighter here can handle that one."

He watched with an odd, sad kind of foreknowledge as Pepe and his assistants closed with the capes. The Miura ran them at once, moving faster than a horse. Sweat was on Pepe's face; knotted muscles showed at the corners of his jaws. He called for the harpoon-hooked *banderillas*, placed the brightly coloured darts at great personal risk, aware that he must attempt the kill as soon as possible.

Juan leaned forward, his gaze given to the bull alone. He was unwilling to look any longer at Pepe. The Mexican didn't have a chance, he realized. Down there on that glittering sand the bull was master, and now was the instant of proof.

It appeared as if Pepe were flung into the air by some mysterious force not at all connected with the bull. He fell on his elbows and his knees, the rounded black hat rolling, the cape twisted, useless, under him. The bull swung again towards Pepe; a deep, groaning, and frightful cry came from the crowd.

But Pepe's capeworkers were in there; they were taking away the Miura with a series of rapid passes. Pepe wasn't dead or even gored, Juan saw. The man had been lucky enough to go in between the horns, and at worst he had some broken ribs and a severe concussion. The president of the ring made a sign, and the trumpeter sounded.

El Diamante, the second fighter, stepped forth from behind the barrier. He was a young man, beautifully dressed in a uniform stiff with bullion and gold lace. But his face was like a mask that didn't fit quite right; his lips twitched and he stared at the Miura with eyes made wide by terror.

No clear sensation was left to Juan except that of dismay. They would hack and jab at the bull now, he understood. The skill was lacking to kill the Miura. But he felt no triumph in the fact. He couldn't laugh when Harry and Joe the Greek thumped his back from behind.

Juan was saddened by El Diamante's appearance. The boy was much too inexperienced to fight this bull; he was rigid with

fright, even when he was still a dozen yards from the Miura. The third fighter, the one named Gallito, also a youngster, stood at the barrier with his hands gripped hard on the wood. "He knows his time is coming, too," Juan thought. "They'll all get a lot rougher treatment than Pepe did unless the president stops it."

The president had made no sign, and El Diamante was getting ready for the kill. He gave no pretence of elaborate capework; he took the sword and sprinted in a shuffling run at the Miura.

His thrust missed by inches. The heavy sword grazed off the backbone, slid down through the glossy black hide outside of the ribs. Juan kept his teeth shut to withhold the curses he wanted to shout. The point of the sword projected from under the Miura's barrel, and the bull roared in frantic agony.

El Diamante had gone back to the barrier for another sword. But he didn't leave there. He stood with his capeworkers close about him while he talked with the other fighter, El Gallito. They gazed with open, unashamed horror at the bull.

It was motionless. Blood dripped from it in dark, bright gouts, and when the beast breathed the sword blade quivered. Juan could sense the meaning of that conversation by the barrier. Neither El Diamante nor Gallito was ready to go against the bull. For them, it meant quite certain death. So they stood and waited.

Now the crowd had begun to scream in a wordless chorus. Men and women wept, made futile, furious gestures of defiance at the bull. Juan looked round, and for an instant happened to see Gagan's face. The mate was pale, and the beads of sweat under his eye gave him a peculiar, harsh expression. "He's counting the five hundred dollars the way you have," Juan thought, but took no satisfaction from it.

His thought was for the bull. It had been easy enough to tell himself aboard ship that he was through with Spain and what that had represented in his life. But he had learned as a boy to have great respect for bulls like the Miura, so terrible and yet so alone down on the bright sand.

Juan moved without conscious effort. He slid from between the Captain and the chief engineer, hurdled down over the inner arena wall in a smoothly gathered leap. Police stationed there tried to stop him, but he was very agile, he ducked past them into the ring.

Two or three of them chased him for some distance. Then they halted as he kept straight on for the bull. He tore off his jacket.

One of El Diamante's men had dropped a cape. Juan bent and whipped it into his hands. He was alone in the ring with the bull.

El Diamante and Gallito and their capeworkers were still gathered behind the barrier. They made no indication that they would come and join him.

"Good," Juan harshly whispered. "They wouldn't do more than chop at the bull. But in another minute or so the president will send the police to shoot it if it won't move easily from the ring. You're the man to do the job, Juanito." He swung the cape a bit to get the weight and tried his balance on the sand. Then he went on to the bull.

The Miura was in that same immobile stance with which it had met El Diamante. "You're a prize knucklehead," Juan told himself. "Remember the stuff you learned as a kid. The bull's standing in what is called *querencia.* You'll be killed sure if you go there. You've got to make it move, take it out to some other place in the ring. But the bull already knows your style from the ship. Change it; fight differently. Here there's no ship to help you. The bull is used to this, though, and to you it's new. Take your time. Go slow. Slow . . ."

He stamped his foot then, and in the silence over the ring he cried out, "*Na-na-na, toro!*"

The bull didn't move. Just the dark-flickering eyes followed him as he stepped closer, spread the cape. He went right in, for there was nothing else to do. The heat of the Miura's breathing was on his hands, fluttered into his face. He walked partway around the bull, letting the bottom of the wide cape drag slightly, and talking to the bull, addressing it with half-forgotten names he had learned on the Isla Menor.

He was not surprised by the charge. He had seen the tensing of the huge forequarter muscles, the way the rear hoofs pulled along the sand. He took the charge in the *suerte de recorte,* close in, body to body, and his was the pivot around which the bull swung.

The hilt of the clumsily impaled sword grazed his hand. He seized the red leather grip and tugged upward, hard and fast. The blade came clear. He wheeled and flung it across the ring on to the sand right in front of El Diamante and Gallito.

He heard the crowd's cheering, but to him the sound was far away, almost meaningless. He thought strangely that here he and the bull went through some ancient and secret rite known only to themselves. Their lives impelled them to it, and for them both, while they understood, there couldn't be any mercy.

He moved again, and he was taking the bull into a *suerte de farol,* the cape high up about his shoulders. "You have the true stuff," he realized. "You're dealing big now, Juanito. But give the crowd a lot more."

He led the Miura, pass by pass, out across the ring. Sweat soaked his shirt, he could feel it binding his trousers about his knees and his eyes smarted with it. But the great, burning sweep of power was in him, gave the strength, the grace he sought.

Right in front of the president's box he performed the *suerte de gallear*, and the cape flicked forth stiffly like the wings of a rooster. Then he gave the full *verónica* with an easy, flowing swirl of motion. It was almost like swimming in the Guadalquivir, he thought. When a man had a bull like this, nothing, nothing was too hard.

He slowly and easily finished the *verónica*. Pocketbooks, money, women's shoes and hats and gloves were being thrown down around him by the crowd. They felt what he did, Juan sensed. This moment of triumph was theirs, too. But it must be. Soon he was going to ask the president for the bull's life.

There was no sword, of course, except for that blade he had flung away. He advanced and gave the *quiebro*, the final feint, and then the bull was beside him, and he took his right hand from the cape and, reaching over the horn lick, touched his palm flat to where the sword would go for the kill.

After that the bull rested, panting, head down, breathing in broken, rough gusts. Juan looked up at the president and lowered the cape. He took off his little beret and held it the way a bull-fighter held his hat. "*Señor el Presidente*," he said, and paused so that the crowd could hear. "Sir, if it pleases you, I ask for the life of this bull. I ask only because a bull so brave should be saved to breed—"

He kept on talking, but the crowd had begun to shout, and the president stood up, made the sign of grace. Juan bowed to him in the fashion he had learned from his mother; then the swift, nearly uncontrollable impulse was on him to weep.

There was the five hundred dollars, he remembered. A bet was a bet, and he'd told Gagan that the Miura would defeat all of the fighters sent against it. But that last pair had still been technically ready to fight. Gagan could say that he'd done this just to try and save the bet. The mate had the right to every dollar of the five hundred . . .

Juan walked staggering towards the barrier. At the back of him Gallito's capeworkers and mounted men with goads were taking the Miura from the ring. Gagan jumped from the barrier. Then the Captain and the chief engineer came down and the crew and the crowd.

"I'll pay you," Juan told Gagan hoarsely. "The chief, he's got the money ready for you."

"Pay me, hell!" Gagan said. Tears were in his eyes, but he was laughing. "Pipe down. We're going to give you a ride."

They carried him around the ring on their shoulders, and the crowd plucked at his clothing, yelled up at him. The president came down and shook hands. "You have done our arena a very great honour," the president said. "It will be remembered long, *señor.*"

A blur came across Juan's thoughts after that. Hours later, though, Gagan on one side of him and the chief engineer on the other, he said to the chief, "When we get back to New York, sir, and my wife comes round to the office, you don't say anything about this, hey?"

"Why not?" the chief said.

Juan ran a hand up over his eyes. "I don't know," he said. "But perhaps she might be scared."

* * *

CRI DE CŒUR

A letter was received by the District Officer of a Nigeria station from a West African native :

Kind Sir,—On opening this epistle you will behold the work of a dejobbed person and a very bewifed and much childrenised gentleman, who was violently dejobbed in a twinkling by your good self.

For Heaven's Sake, sir, consider this catastrophe as falling on your own head, and remind yourself on walking home at the moon's end to five savage wives and sixteen voracious children with your pocket filled with non-existent £ s d and a solitary sixpence; pity my horrible state.

As to the reason given by yourself esquire for my dejobment the incrimination was laziness. No, sir. It were impossible that myself who has pitched sixteen children into this vale of tears can have a lazy atom in his mortal frame, and a sudden departure of £11 has left me on the verge of destitution and despair.

I hope this vision of horror will enrich your dreams this night and the good Angel will melt and pulverise your heart of nether milestone so that you will awaken with such alacrity to rejobulate your servant. So mote it be, Amen.

History does not relate if he got the job back.

PETERBOROUGH, *in The Daily Telegraph*

KARMESIN

Either the greatest criminal — or the greatest liar — of all time

by GERALD KERSH

I NEVER appreciated arithmetical progression until, in Busto's apartment-house, I learned how tea three times infused becomes intolerably weak, and how cigarette-ends twice rolled grow unbearably strong. I may have learned a little geometry at school, but I had to struggle with Busto's blankets before I realized how ridiculously incongruous two rectangles can be, and I had to sleep on one of Busto's beds before I got to know the difference between looking at an angle and lying on one.

In short, I completed my education in Busto's apartment-house. The physics of cold and darkness became as an open book to me; I picked up zoology without a tutor—I studied it by match-light, with nothing but a thumbnail for a scalpel; and Karmesin taught me how to rob a bank.

I wish you could have met that powerful personality, that immense old man with his air of shattered magnificence. I see again his looming chest and unfathomable abdomen, still excellently dressed in a suit of sound blue serge; the strong cropped skull and the massive purple face; the tattered white eyebrows and the heavy, yellowish eyes, as large as little plums; the vast Nietzsche moustache, light brown with tobacco-smoke, which lay beneath his nose like a hibernating squirrel, concealing his mouth, and stirring like a living thing as he breathed upon it.

And what was Karmesin?

If the things he told me were true, he must have been the greatest criminal of his time. If they were not, then he must have been the greatest liar of all time.

He was one of these two things; which one, I have never been able to determine.

"The fact is, that I have what you would call a creative mind," said Karmesin.

"A remarkable talent for fiction?" I suggested.

"That is quite right. I have conceived many crime-stories, and then made them come true. There is money to be made out of such fiction. Why are there no detective-story writers who are

successful criminals ? Simply because they are too nervous, and my energy was colossal. But to be a writer, it is necessary to be lazy."

"And so you really have committed perfect crimes ?"

"I have already said so."

"I've been told that there's no such thing."

"Yes, I know. The little slip that brings the criminal to justice. That was invented by writers. Why *should* one make a little slip ? I never did."

"Never ?"

"I have never pandered to the traditionalists. I have never been so obliging as to knock cigar-ash all over the floor, or to trample on the flower-beds with peculiar boots. Pfui ! I once made a slight miscalculation, but never a slip."

"Then the crime couldn't have been perfect."

"On the contrary, it was. The slight miscalculation had nothing to do with the actual crime, which was quite neat and beautiful. But it was a lesson to me. I have even kept documentary evidence of that crime, in order to check any possible excess of exuberance in subsequent moments of triumph."

Karmesin fumbled in an inside pocket, and took out an ancient pass-book, dated 1910, stamped with the imprint of Lombard's Bank, and inscribed with the name of Ivan Jovanovitch. His fingers flicked over the pages. He pointed to the last entry, indicating a credit balance of over three thousand pounds.

"You will observe, my friend, that a M. Jovanovitch had three thousand pounds to his credit in Lombard's Bank."

"Yes ?"

"I was Jovanovitch."

"Your savings ?"

"Endeavour not to be stupid. I am now telling you the story of a perfect bank-robbery. In a few months one may show a profit of fifteen thousand pounds. It is a profitable side-line."

"Did you work it ?"

"Need you ask ? I will tell you the procedure. I arrived in England in January, 1910. My name for the time being was Jovanovitch. My passport said so. I was a merchant, you understand, with excellent references, dealing in Eastern European commodities. I took a very good suite of offices in a very good part of the city, and settled down to do business."

"And did you really do business ?"

"Yes. Why not ? Do you think that one has to behave in accordance with Sherlock Holmes, and other rabble, and slink through back alleys with a crafty look on the face ? It is essential to go about like a fictitious financier, with cigars, and gardenias, *chort vozmi* ! and other trinkets ! . . . Yes, I imported tobacco

from the Balkans. There is good honest profit in Serbian tobacco. I also opened this current account at Lombard's Bank. I deposited three thousand pounds. For over six months I carried on my legitimate business. I received cheques from well-known firms and paid them into my account. I withdrew sums of money. Sometimes, they rose to four thousand. In general, however, I kept a steady cash balance of three thousand pounds—but you must already have guessed my plans ? "

" I assure you, I haven't the faintest idea."

" Ha ! And these are the people that set themselves up as critics ! *Ekh* ! "

" Well, after six months, what happened ? "

" At this point, it became necessary to enlist the services of three collaborators. They were men I knew very well ; three Hungarians, named Lajos, Hunyadi, and Kovacs—I do not think that Kovacs was his real name, but that is of no consequence. I put my proposition to them. I asked them if they would care to earn—two hundred pounds was a lot of money. These men, moreover, were Hungarians. I need scarcely say that they saw eye to eye with me. Then, when everything was ready, I went to Lombard's Bank, and asked to see the manager."

Karmesin paused.

" Well ? " I said.

" Do you mean to say that you still fail to see my idea ? "

" I do."

" And yet it is so childishly simple."

" Well, you went to see the manager . . . "

" Yes. You observed, on my pass-book, that my branch of the bank was the Fleet Street Branch, which is one of the busiest branches of Lombard's Bank. You have, no doubt, seen the inside of it, if only from a distance. It is as large as the main entrance to a big railway station. A dozen tellers work at a huge counter, which goes round in a curve, not unlike a race-track. Bear this in mind. Well, as I was saying, I arranged to see the manager, and I met that very busy gentleman in his office.

" I said to him : ' Forgive me if I use a little of your valuable time, but I have a rather unusual request to make.'

" ' What is it, Mr. Jovanovitch ? '

" ' I have opened certain negotiations with the firm of Leduc et Cie. It is absolutely essential that I keep on good terms with them.'

" ' Yes ? '

" ' I have to make a cash payment to them of five thousand pounds.'

" ' Oh, but—'

"'Oh, don't be alarmed,' I said, 'I know that I have only three thousand pounds at present deposited with you. I have the other two thousand pounds with me, now.' And I took from my wallet banknotes to the value of two thousand pounds, and put them on the manager's desk.

"So that brought my credit to a total of five thousand pounds.

"Well, the manager looked at the notes, and then he looked at me, and he said:

"'I don't quite see . . .'

"'My position', I said, 'is this. It is absolutely essential that I convey to Leduc's agent an impression of financial solidity. I know I have enough to my credit to meet the cheque, which he will present for payment on Friday morning. Is that so?'

"'Of course, Mr. Jovanovitch.'

"'Well, when their agent presents the cheque, I want you to pay him the cash without hesitation, without delay. I do not want your clerks to look up my account. There must be no delay in the payment; no query; nothing at all of that sort. Can you arrange this for me?'

"'Well, Mr. Jovanovitch, it is a rather unusual request, but I see no reason why not.'

"'Excellent. I should be very grateful if you would be so kind as to instruct your chief clerk to that effect now, in my presence,' I said. 'You will understand that this means a great deal to me, and it would set my mind at rest.'

"'Why, yes,' said the manager, and he called in the chief clerk, and gave him those instructions."

I looked at my boots to avoid Karmesin's searching glance.

"Well?" he said.

"Well?" I said.

"Good God above! Can't you see? At precisely mid-day on Friday, at the busiest hour, I, carefully disguised, together with my three collaborators, each of us with an identical cheque for five thousand pounds, walked up to four clerks at convenient distances along that enormous counter, and walked out together with twenty thousand pounds!"

"Magnificent!" I exclaimed.

"Boldness and simplicity were the keynotes of that little effort," said Karmesin, with a reminiscent smile.

"And what happened then?"

"Why, in two seconds we were in a motor car which was waiting outside—*paf*, *paf*? We were gone. That was a perfect crime."

"But I seem to remember your mentioning something about a slight miscalculation," I said.

"*Da.* We reached a place a few miles out, at which we were

to part. I took out three packets of small notes, and said: 'Here, boys; two hundred pounds each, as arranged. Now, let me have those bank notes.'

"You may imagine my astonishment when Kovacs took out a heavy revolver . . ."

Karmesin shrugged his shoulders so philosophically that a piece of plaster fell down from the ceiling.

"They got away with it?" I asked.

"Even my watch," said Karmesin, "but what can one do? One learns by one's mistakes. All the same, it was a pity. Twenty thousand pounds was a lot of money before the war."

And he thrust into the mysterious hinterland of his gargantuan moustache the last of a packet of cheap cigarettes.

* * *

DEDICATION

There is singing and light and the warmth of a myriad candles
Shining through my transparent flesh.
And I walk through the dark music of the forest
And where the high note sings among the lemon groves,
Carrying my heart most gently and with still concentration,
Shielding the flame and the burning oil.

The soft skins of the horses that follow at my side
In slow processional walk,
Shine with the tears my heart has spilt;
And there is tiptoe silence in the deep snow
Where the white unicorn has passed and left no footprints.

Here, at the shrine,
Wearing a small, slow smile, and my wrists aching with stillness,
I lift the votive lamp to its appointed niche,
And can leave the quiet place with no prayer
For the tending of the flame.
It will burn.

T. M. SILLARS

BYWAYS

Down crooked lanes with country folk for company, and a halt for a mug of ale

About Wednesday August the thirtieth Mr. Freke sitting in A Chaire by my Greatt Barne doore to see A Load of Barley goe into the Barne, I was butt Just Gone from him (I think for a couchin for him) And the horses very gentle; without any provocation, the Cartt In the Twinkling of an Eye Run Itt selfe full against that Chaire Mr. Freke was sitting In & Broke Itt all to Bitts, To the A Mazement of All that saw Itt; and a new Chaire too.

MRS. ELIZABETH FREKE, *of West Bilney, Norfolk, in a Journal*, 1704

Farmer's Daughter

Queen Mary, Queen Mary, my age is sixteen,
My father's a farmer on yonder green.
He's plenty of money to dress me, an' a',
An' there's nae *bonnie laddie will tak' me awa' !*

This morning I rose and I looked in the glass ;
Says I to myself : " What a handsome young lass ! "
I tossed up my head and I gave a " Ha ! ha ! "
There's nae bonnie laddie will tak' me *awa !*

Scots Rhyme

The Waits

Directly music was the theme, old William ever and instinctively came to the front.

" Now mind, naibours," he said . . . " all o' ye, whatever ye do, keep from making a great scuffle on the ground when we go in at people's gates; but go quietly, so as to strik' up all of a sudden, like spirits."

" Farmer Ledlow's first ? "

" Farmer Ledlow's first; the rest as usual."

" And, Voss," said the tranter terminatively, " you keep house here till about half-past two; then heat the metheglin and cider

in the warmer you'll find turned up upon the copper; and bring it wi' the victuals to church porch, as th'st know . . ."

"Times have changed from times they used to be," said Mail . . . "I've been thinking, we must be almost the last left in the county of the old string players. Barrel-organs, and they next door to 'em that you blow wi' your foot, have come in terribly of late years."

"More's the pity," replied another. "Time was—long and merry ago now!—when not one of the varmits was to be heard of; but it served some of the choirs right. They should have stuck to strings as we did, and keep out clar'nets, and done away with serpents. If you'd thrive in musical religion, stick to strings, says I."

"There's worse things than serpents," said Mr. Penny. "Old things pass away, 'tis true; but a serpent was a good old note: a deep rich note was the serpent."

"Clar'nets, however, be bad at all times," said Michael Mail. "One Christmas—years agone now, years—I went the rounds wi' the Dibbeach choir. 'Twas a hard frosty night, and the keys of all the clar'nets froze—ah, they did freeze!—so that 'twas like drawing a cork every time a key was opened; the players o' 'em had to go into a hedger and ditcher's chimley-corner, and thaw their clar'nets every now and then. An icicle o' spet hung down from the end of every man's clar'net a span long . . ."

By this time they were crossing to a wicket in the direction of the school . . . The instruments were retuned, and all the band entered the enclosure, enjoined by old William to keep upon the grass.

"Number seventy-eight," he softly gave out.

THOMAS HARDY, 1840-1928,
Under the Greenwood Tree

Thirsty Work

	£	s.	d.
For beer to the ringers when the bell founder was here ..		2	6
When the bell was weighed		3	6
When the bell was loaded		2	0
In carrying ye bell to Lewes and back again	1	10	0
When the bell was waid and hung up		3	0
For beer to the officers and several others a hanging up ye bell		18	0
In beer to the ringers when ye bell was hung		6	6

From an Eighteenth Century Churchwardens' Account-book

The Rolling Road

Before the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn strode,
The rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road.
A reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round the shire,
And after him the parson ran, the sexton and the squire ;
A merry road, a mazy road, and such as we did tread
The night we went to Birmingham by way of Beachy Head.

I knew no harm of Bonaparte and plenty of the Squire,
And for to fight the Frenchman I did not much desire ;
But I did bash their baggonets because they came arrayed
To straighten out the crooked road an English drunkard made,
Where you and I went down the lane with ale-mugs in our hands,
The night we went to Glastonbury by way of Goodwin Sands.

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON, 1874-1936

Heaven

An old Gypsy woman . . . once dreamed she was in heaven. It appeared to her as a large garden, full of fine fat hedgehogs.

RICHARD LIEBICH, *The Gypsies*

Benison

If I had store
By sheep and fold
I'd give you gold ;

But, since I'm poor,
By crook and bell
I wish you well.

An old Sussex Shepherds' Toast

Shepherd's Passport

Before parting from the Sussex shepherd let us remember the old folk custom when a shepherd died. The sheep have to be cared for on Sundays as well as week-days, and therefore the shepherd has few opportunities for attending church. So, just to remind the Almighty that he did not deserve reproach for his absence, a lock of sheep's wool was laid on the shepherd's breast before he was enclosed in his coffin.

ESTHER MEYNELL, *Sussex*

BLACK MAGGIE

"I shall pay," said Shone's new wife, "from my private source"

by CLEDWYN HUGHES

SHONE and his first wife had not worried much about water in all the years that they had lived at Cefn, the small whitewashed cottage, bright and clear, just under the first green firs on the side of the mountain. An old house, rafters inside, and the glass in the window with a great bull's-eye in the middle. So that the view across the valley was only clear when the window was open. The view down the mountain and across the neat river meadows to the twists of the river.

And as if to balance the view there was the inconvenience of Cefn. The place had no water but what was carried from the Little Well, a hundred yards away, and bubbling clear in hot summer or frosty winter.

Shone having to carry all the water up to the house in a bucket, every night after he had finished work on the County Council roads. Thinking nothing of it, the habit coming to him easily, and his first wife, she not worrying. And on a Monday washing day going down in the later afternoon herself, when all the rain-water had been used up from the great black tub at the back of the house.

Shone had retired from the roads, safe with his pension. Putting away his barrow and line and spade one autumn night and knowing that never again would he have to trim the roads. Taking his scythe home on his back and knowing that he had cut the last free grass for ever. Free grass he called it—the grass on the wide verges of the road.

Shone had retired in the autumn and had all the days on his hands. All day in which to carry water, taking his bucket down to the Little Well and sinking it in the deep little stone-walled pool. Lifting it up and carrying it up the path to Cefn. Resting sometimes, for the path was steep and there was the weight to the bucket now, a weight which he had not noticed in past years.

With the Spring his wife died. A sudden dreadful colic coming to her so that it was a blessing when the time came for her to go. And Shone had been full of longing at her going, not believing that the hold of forty years could snap in the cold Spring sunshine.

He had been lost at first, finding that she had done so many jobs for him, which he noticed now for the first time. Lighting the morning fire and every meal ready at the right hour.

But Shone married again in the summer. Sudden and unexpected, with all the neighbours shocked and the Rector marrying them at ten o'clock in the morning. He half ashamed as it were of the whole business, looking over the top of his rimless glasses and sniffing with his hay fever.

And it was Maggie, of all women. Black Maggie who lived in the house at the end of the bridge in the village, and which was due for knocking down in the winter when the bridge widening was to start.

People said she only wanted a home, now that her house was to fall. For what other reason could she want to marry Shone the Roadman ?

And Shone himself ? He, what respect could he have to do a thing like this ? To marry this Black Maggie, the most dangerous woman in the village ? She who lived by a day's cleaning here and there and who told fortunes to the visitors. She who could make lucky charms and give blessings and could tell whether a cow was to calf heifer or bull by laying her hands on its hip bones. She who wore the black hairy gloves in the winter, made, so it was said, out of the skins of black cats which she had caught and fattened.

And there was the time, too, when Mrs. Pugh the Pub had bought a beautiful black pedigree cockerel from her sister in the next valley. But the black cock had only been in the pub back yard one night, and then it had quite gone. And not so much as a feather or a drop of blood to show that a fox had been. There hadn't been a case of fowl stealing within living memory. And Wilks the Police had let it be known that in his own private opinion it was Maggie—Black Maggie. It was she who had taken the black cock. For the arts of the devil he had said, and had crossed his chest quickly with his stub of a pencil.

Good old simple Shone the Roadman marrying this woman—this dangerous woman. A basinful of the devil was what one of the neighbours had said, and had asked Shone why he had done this thing. And Shone had set the bucket down on the road, the water spilling ; and saying only that Maggie was a good housekeeper and that he was lonely. And that she, too, was lonely and that her house by the bridge would soon be made to fall down.

They had known then, but could not believe that it was all as simple as that. That some day Shone, old honest Shone, would have his eyes opened in an awful way to this Black Woman he had married in the heat of summer.

It was the end of the second week that Maggie started to grumble. A middle-aged woman with black greasy hair roped round into a great pile on her head, skewered there with a pearl-headed pin. A big limbed woman and walking with a swaying stride. Her eyes, too, a kind of magnet, she staring in an unblinking way, and there was no running away from her look. So that people watched the floor when they spoke to her. And Shone himself got in the habit of talking to the back or the side of his new wife.

But the second week she started to grumble, catching old Shone with a straight look as he came breathing heavy with a bucket of water into the red flagged doorway.

"Water again, Shone; we use a lot."

"Yes, Maggie, we use more than did the first wife."

"We are cleaner, Shone, that is it. That is what it is. She must have been a slut."

"Oh no, she was wonderful clean."

"How could she be if she used less water than me? But I do not blame her, for there is no water here—a sad inconvenience, Shone, no water."

Anxiously he answered her.

"For forty years, Maggie, I have lived here and have carried water, and I do not mind the trip."

"But I mind, Shone. Fancy bringing a wife to a house where there is no supply of water. It is a shady thing to do. Tomorrow you will go and see Rees the Pumpmaker and we will have a pump-well made before the house and a pump with a handle so that we can have clean water just for the moving of a handle."

"But the cost, Maggie, the cost. What of that?"

"I shall pay."

And she leaned forward from her tallness, lengthening her closed lips, for she never opened her mouth to smile, having only gum and no tooth. "I shall pay, Shone bach, from my private source."

The next morning Shone went to see Rees the Pumpmaker, he who lived in the house next to the Post Office. And with a big sign outside which said:

T. Rees, Pumpmaker and Well Sinker.

Rees who could go down a well to any black depth, old or new, but who was well known in the village for not being able to stand heights. He who could descend a hundred feet but who could not go up in the air ten feet.

Rees the Pumpmaker all the village called him. Though in his early days he had been called Rees Bowels, from his having to

spend all his working days in the bowels of the earth.

He was a sharp-spoken, red-headed little man with a habit of looking up to the sky; a habit got, so it was said, from working all his days in wells and looking up often to make sure that the daylight was above him, and that he was not closed in for ever.

The pumpmaker came to the door after Shone had knocked twice. Opening it and calling—

"Morning. Well, Shone?"

"Morning, Mr. Rees, it is that I want to see you."

"Me, Shone? Well, what is it?"

"I want a pumpwell made, Mr. Rees, just in front of my house."

"A well, Shone? You, a well—after all this long time?"

Shone waved his hand around in a kind of apology.

"'Tis my new wife, Mr. Rees; she says that I must not carry the water all the way from the Little Well."

"Oh. Before your house, you say? A good spot that, Shone. Water at thirty feet. Who will pay?"

"My wife now, she says she will do all the paying, Mr. Rees. It is her affair really."

"Oh, Black Maggie. Not sure I am whether I can take her money."

"Take her money, Mr. Rees? Why, it is as good as any other; money is money."

"True, Shone. I will come tomorrow. Me and my mate will come to start your well."

In the early morning sunshine Rees and the lad who helped him came up the path from the main road to Cefn. Carrying their ropes and their buckets and their windlass. Spades over shoulders and picks under arms. Maggie and Shone coming to the door to watch them. Rees calling out to Maggie, his face up at the sky—

"Good morning, Maggie. You want a well, you say?"

"That's right, Mr. Rees. We want a water supply, in front of the house, if possible. I will settle with you."

"Right."

And Rees took off his coat and gave it to the lad, who folded it neatly on the ground. Then Rees walked up and down the bare patch in front of the garden, outside the low box hedge. Stopping suddenly and kicking the ground with his heel, the dust rising, drifting away.

"Here, lad. Set the spike."

From the tools the lad took a long rod with a spike in the middle of it, set the spike in the heel mark and swivelled the rod round, tracing out the diameter of the new well.

Maggie came up to Mr. Rees.

"You will brick it, of course, Mr. Rees, and set up a small pump?"

Rees picked up a spade and the lad a pick. Both of them started on the soil, Rees at the same time answering Maggie.

"The load of bricks will come this way in the evening and we will brick up the well and set up the pump when we have found water."

All that day they dug, the soft shale of the mountainside thrown out in spadefuls. And when they had gone too deep to throw, Rees stayed at the bottom filling a bucket with soil, the lad winding it up on the windlass; Maggie and Shone coming sometimes to take a peep over the edge.

That evening a load of bricks came, and after that Rees and his lad went home. Coming again next morning and digging all day, and by the next evening reaching the thirty foot mark. A shout from Rees echoing up the well:

"Water!"

The lad then quickly filled the bucket with bricks and let it down. Soon afterwards Rees came up, and Maggie was waiting for him, looking at his wet hands.

"You have found water then, Mr. Rees?"

Rees shook his hands and the water flicked away from the tips of his fingers.

"We have, Maggie, and we have laid the first few lines of bricks."

"You will brick all the sides sound and proper; I want the well to last, Mr. Rees."

"Every well that I make I brick—and it will last, Maggie. Thirty foot deep your well, and plenty of water. Tomorrow we will carry on with the bricking, and one of the next days you will be able to clank the pump."

A long speech and, somehow, in the talking, she had caught his eye, held his gaze as she answered him:

"I am glad that it will be a sound well with plenty of water. May I go down the well to see, Mr. Rees?"

She had got his eye, and Shone, listening by the door, knew that there would be no refusing.

Maggie climbed into the bucket and with his own hands Rees let her down into the well, winding her up again when she had said that she had seen enough and what a wonderful pumpmaker Mr. Rees was to find water like that.

Rees and his lad bricked the well, set a pipe running up the middle of it with a valve, and a ball filter at the bottom; and at the top a neat little green pump on a wooden stand. They covered

the well over with great oak beams, and on top they put concrete and a manhole.

Rees came out of the manhole for the last time, smacked his hands together, and trod triumphantly on the iron covering.

"There, Maggie. There is your well."

And to demonstrate to them all, he gave half a dozen pumps on the handle, the water gushing out clear and cold into the bucket held by the lad.

"There, Maggie, your pump for you." And then, turning to Shone—"See, Shone, no more buckets to carry from the Little Well."

Shone nodded and looked away down the path, as if remembering all the buckets he had carried from the Little Well—summer and winter—for forty years.

"I shall miss it, Mr. Rees."

Maggie slapped him on the shoulder, and then put her arm around his neck.

"Go on, Shone; think of how much more I shall see of you now."

The lad was putting the last of the tools away, and Rees was waiting before Shone and Maggie, waiting until Maggie had finished, and then—

"The matter of pay, Maggie. I would like to be paid on the nail. The job is done now. How about it?"

Everyone knew that Mr. Rees was quick with his bills, but even he had never been known to demand pay before the concrete was set.

Maggie took her hand away from the back of Shone, put her hands together in front of her, and bent forward.

"Rees the Pumpmaker, I have paid you. Your reward was left at the bottom of the well that day I went down."

Rees put his fingers splayed out through his red hair.

"Cash, please, Maggie."

But she shook her head and reached up, fastening her hair tighter with the long pin.

"Oh no; no cash from Maggie, Mr. Rees. I left your reward at the bottom of the well. At midnight tonight it will take effect. Come, my Shone, into the house. Mr. Rees will have to wait for his reward until midnight."

She linked her arm with Shone and took him towards the sun-blistered front door, the bubble of paint broken and peeling. By the door, stopping and calling back to Rees, standing there quiet with the lad at the back of him.

"Wait till midnight, Mr. Rees, and it will be a worthy reward that you will have. It was given to you at the bottom of the well.

I left the blessing there ; at twelve tonight it will take effect."

Rees the Pumpmaker turned then and ran down the path away from Cefn cottage, the lad coming slower after him, laden with the tools, and a little frightened that Mr. Rees, who cared not for any man, should run like this.

But Rees himself went on down the mountain, waiting for the lad only at the main road, and knowing well in his heart that he should never have undertaken to do this thing—to make a well for Maggie, for she was Black, and her pay would be like that, too. And midnight only six hours away.

Rees was a religious man. And he was a bachelor, a churchwarden, and so it was easy for him to carry out his plan. The plan which came to him in the quiet of his house when he had sent the lad home with a last promise to keep all this secret. Rees felt that his only hope was to be in the church at twelve o'clock this night ; there, perhaps, this blessing which was due for him would not take effect, for in his heart Rees knew that this blessing from Black Maggie must be in itself a black thing, an evil thing, for the power she had without doubt was straight from Satan himself.

So Rees decided that it must be the church at midnight. He felt secure in his plan, and took off his boots and lit the fire, putting on his warm cloth slippers and making a meal for himself, even humming a little tune to himself, safe in the knowledge that his plans would defeat Maggie. Never mind if there was no cash payment ; that was only a worldly thing now, and of little importance in dealing with the things of Eternity.

At a quarter to midnight Rees the Pumpmaker started to make a cup of cocoa for himself. Mixing the brown powder to a smooth paste, and lifting the big black kettle off the fire on to the hob of the grate, there sliding forward the kettle, ready to tilt it and fill up the cup, for Rees did not like milk, hot or cold, and drank his cocoa made only with water, but very sweet.

And then it happened.

Looking back, long afterwards, Rees believed that it was all part of Maggie's plan. She and the Devil had led him up the garden path with hope that all would be well. And, to make sure that all would not be well, that he could not go to the church at midnight, they had arranged this accident, an accident more frightening than disastrous, though painful enough, and a sure guarantee that Rees could not go to the church at twelve. For the kettle slipped as if pushed from behind, and a straight spout of steaming water hit his one ankle. With a yell Rees let go of the kettle, and it fell sideways into the last of the fire, a tremendous steam and a white ash clouding the room, a hissing and sizzle, and,

above all, the shouts of Rees as he hopped from chair back to table edge.

It so happened that at that moment Wilks the Police was doing his walk down the village. Every night at some time he went on his beat—a slow walk from one end of the village to the other. And the one thing that the Devil and Maggie could not control was the walkings of Wilks.

He was passing by, and said afterwards that it was the noise which attracted his attention. The shouts of Rees and the way the shadow of him kept hopping across the blind, side to side, so that he thought that burglars were giving poor Rees the round of the kitchen, for there was no woman living with him, and there was no dog to go suddenly mad.

Wilks went to the door, and saw that it was hopeless knocking because of the noise. He went into the dark little hall, and from there into the kitchen. Through the steam and the white cinder flake he could just see the red head of Rees as he danced and reached down every now and then to his ankle.

From the door, Wilks the Police called to him—

"Mr. Rees, now; what is it, man?"

"I have been scalded, Wilks. My ankle has had the awful scald."

Wilks the Police went in to him then and sat him on the sofa, looked at his one ankle, and could see the red flesh there above where his sock had rolled down, steaming. Wilks took off the carpet slipper and emptied the hot water out of it into the grate.

"It must be the doctor for you, Rees; that is a nasty burn. Come now, take my shoulder and we will go to the surgery. But put your coat on first."

Rees put on a coat, and then, leaning on Wilks's blue shoulder, went down the street towards the doctor's surgery, only twenty yards away.

But, gone ten yards, Rees remembered that it was midnight almost, and that for safety he should be in the church.

He halted Wilks.

"Wilks, man, what is the time?"

Wilks pulled out his watch on a silver chain from his breast pocket.

"It is twelve, Rees. Why?"

"Oh dear, Wilks."

"Come now! What is the matter, Rees? The doctor is often called up at night, and this is a *locum* man, anyway, so no matter if we do offend him. He will not mind coming down in the dressing gown to attend to you. Come on!"

But Rees would not move.

"No, no, Wilks. I should be in the church now, man. Take

me to the church, please."

In the darkness Wilks was smiling at him kindly.

"No, no, Rees. 'Tis your mind that is wandering a little, what with the stress and the accident that you have had. What man could possibly want to go to the church, even a churchwarden like you, Rees, at midnight? Come on, now, with me to the surgery."

And there was no persuading Wilks, and Rees could not tell him all the story for fear that he would say that it was his mind still rambling. There was no going to the church alone, anyway, what with the ankle as it was and Wilks the Police pulling him gently forward.

Wilks got Rees to the surgery, got the doctor out of bed; he coming down in a red dressing gown and a new-lit cigarette in his mouth.

Wilks explained the case, and they carried Rees in.

Sitting Rees on a couch, the doctor pulled the sock right away, Rees giving little groans and Wilks sitting at the head of the couch and making little soothing noises.

And then the doctor rolled up the one trouser leg far above the knee over on itself, and showing the short, thick, muscled leg of Rees, strong from all the years of digging. The doctor turned the cloth up far above the knee.

It was on the last turn that it came to sight.

The three of them saw it, Rees himself looking down at his own leg.

There it was, the tip of a hairy tail peeping out from under the rolled-up trouser.

A quietness, then the doctor and the policeman looking at each other, and then both at the same time looking at Rees.

Rees was the first to speak.

"W— What is it, doctor?"

The doctor reached out and pulled gently at the tail.

"You should know; it's your tail. Can you feel that now?"

And the doctor gave a hard nip with his fingers to the tail. Rees jumped.

"Indeed I can, doctor. Indeed I can."

Wilks the Police had his notebook out, but the doctor frowned and Wilks put it away quickly.

The doctor spoke to Rees.

"Take your trousers off."

They had to help him, for poor Rees was trembling dreadfully.

The tail was indeed a part of Rees, joined where all tails do— a long hairy thing, with a slight curve in the length of it.

Quickly they put Rees's trousers back on him, the doctor dressed and bandaged the scald.

And then the three of them were very quiet.

Then Rees told them all : about the pumpwell and the payment that Maggie had promised ; what she had left for him at the bottom of the well.

" I caught the blessing from the bottom of the well, and she said that I would know all about it at midnight. That was why I wanted to be taken to the church, Wilks ; I knew that I would be safe there. And now, this ! "

And he pointed to the rear of him.

The doctor (this strange one to the valley, while old Dr. Toos went on his holiday) started now to ask questions.

" But even an evil blessing has some compensation. She has paid you in some way, even though in the process she has given you a tail. Have you no urge inside you, a feeling that you didn't have before ? "

Rees nodded happily.

" Indeed I have, to climb things."

The doctor spoke to Wilks the Police.

" I guessed as much. She has made him into half a monkey so that he can climb up out of pumpwells—climb up a rope if necessary."

" Indeed I can. I can climb up any rope, any day," Rees interrupted.

As if speaking of some animal, the doctor went on :

" That's right, then ; that's why he has the tail. I daresay he could swing himself from it."

Wilks stood away from Rees as if he was some unknown monster. Answéred back to the doctor—

" What shall we do with him, doctor ? "

" Perhaps it will be the Rector who will be our salvation. Wait for me to get into some clothes and then we can go to the Rectory straight away—and the sooner the better."

Wilks insisted on handcuffing Rees to a chair while the doctor was gone. And then the two of them took poor hobbling Rees the Pumpmaker up the long drive to the Rectory.

The Rector was annoyed at first, and it was not until they actually showed him the tail of Rees in the light of Wilks's torch would he let them in.

And inside the old Rectory, in the big rambling hallway there, they told him the story.

For a long time the only thing that the Rector could say was, " My poor churchwarden, my poor churchwarden."

And after that he told them his plan. That there was nothing he could do. That he had learnt Hebrew and Greek and Theology at the University, but very little of practical use when face to face with the work of the Devil. But that he suggested that they should all go and see Black Maggie.

"We'll all go together, the four of us. She knows the secret of these things, and if she cares she can tell me the rites to make our late friend here human again."

And, to humour the situation, he made some little joke about Rees being the very man in his present state to paint the high weather-cock on top of the steeple—that which hadn't been painted for forty years and which no local painter had the nerve to go up to.

The joke went ill, and the Rector went then and came back with an old bath chair with squeaking wheels. They sat Rees in this, keeping a firm hand on his shoulder and taking him at a good speed through the village and up the side of the mountain to Cefn cottage, its walls white and clear in the darkness.

Wilks knocked on the door, and it was old Shone who came down to the inside of it, shouting from there—

"Who's there?"

"Open in the name of the law," yelled Wilks, banging with drawn truncheon on the door of the cottage.

Shone opened up then, and Wilks put out a hand to the old man.

"Your wife, where is she? In the house, or out on a broom-stick?"

"Oh no, she's only upstairs. Shall I fetch her?"

"Tell her it's the Police. Tell her more, Shone. Tell her that it's the Church as well. That'll bring her down."

Shone went up the stairs leading straight from the little hallway. Wilks stood back, and the Rector and the Doctor bowled Rees forward in the bath chair.

A minute afterwards and Maggie came down, a black coat around her and the white hem of a nightdress underneath it. She was a little frightened, they could see that. Frightened at this visit of the Doctor and the Police and the Rector, most important men in any village.

They made her light the two-burner oil lamp in the kitchen. And then the four of them went in, Rees out of his chair and hopping like a big bird between the Rector and Wilks.

Shone they sent upstairs, and the last they saw of him was the way he looked down from the door at the top of the stairs, the whites of his eyes clear in the half darkness.

And then they sat Rees in one chair, and opposite him they sat Maggie.

It was Wilks who took charge of the proceedings. Made the most awful threats to her of what would happen unless she told the Rector the formula to release poor Rees from his possession, telling her that it was a mean thing to do after all this trouble which Rees had gone to in making a well.

She listened with her tight-lipped smile, knew that she was cornered, and made the excuse—

"Oh, Mr. Wilks, I was only doing Mr. Rees a good turn, to save him the use of ladders and to give him a good head for heights. Why, now he can climb a rope just like a monkey."

It was Wilks who answered.

"Mr. Rees has worked all his days down wells, and quite all right with his head as it is, Maggie. The doctor is here, and the Rector, too. You must release Rees, or else—"

And Wilks took out his notebook and pencil, writing in the date and saying:

"One time they used to burn witches like you, Maggie, and I daresay that one or two of the laws are still in force."

She unpinned her hair then, taking out the long pearl-headed pin. Wilks stepped back as the hair fell around her face. The Rector and the Doctor went forward to protect Rees in case she should touch him with the bright steel.

But she was only waving the pin, the steel stem glinting in the lamplight. And she was laughing in an open way so that they could see the inside of her mouth, black and red.

They waited for her to finish, and were quiet.

It was Maggie who spoke next.

"I will release Rees, harmless little man, and almost as useless as my husband. I only meant to help him, make him like a steeplejack. I will tell the Rector the secret. But let me touch Rees with the pin, for it will take time, the process, and afterwards I will explain to the Rector."

But for his bad ankle they all believe that Rees would have run for it, tail or no tail, as Maggie leant forward to touch his cheek with the pin.

Even as it was, he managed to hobble to the back door and was trying to undo the bolts before they got him back. And he was on his knees asking them to let him be in peace with his tail, that he was quite satisfied, for would not the woman give him horns next and breath of brimstone? But they soothed him and told him that it was for his own good and that it would be his salvation. They would see that no harm came to him. And so they sat him in the chair again and held him there while Maggie touched him twice with her pin. And after that she asked the Rector to go out with her.

But the Rector would not go out with her alone, for he said that he had a wife and that if this Maggie possessed him with a tail it would be the end of his matrimony and the end of his days in his godly calling. Even as he spoke, he slid his hand anxiously down the back of his trousers, and, seeing him do that made the Doctor and Wilks do the same.

Maggie called to them.

"Don't worry, gentlemen. I have power for one only at a time. I could give you horns though, Rector, and no pants would hide those. Come, you silly men. I will not touch you."

And so it was that the Rector went with her to a far corner of the room, and there she whispered to him and then they came back.

Wilks spoke to her.

"You have told him?"

"I have."

"And if, by chance, Maggie, you have pulled a fast one on us, then I swear that I will have you stoned out of this valley."

"Don't worry, policeman, your Rector knows. Bowl your chair outside and it will all be over."

Glad to go, they turned their backs on her. Even before they were outside she had put out the lamp, and they could tell by the way she banged the door after them that she was angry.

Outside, the Rector took Rees a little way ahead in the chair, and when they caught up with them it was a happy Rees calling from the chair.

"Gone, quite gone!"

They all went to the Police Station then for a cup of tea, all making an oath to keep this thing secret, and all with a thought for poor old Shone, that humble old man with even the joy of his water-carrying gone now, for ever.

Rees recovered completely, his ankle fine. And he has a head for heights, now being able to stand on any dizzy wall where once he would have been quite sick.

But he sent in his bill, with a request for cash payment done in red ink bought specially for the purpose.

Old Shone came to pay.

An ageing old man, and more of a tremble than any man of his age in the village. Brought the money in an envelope and kept calling Rees "Sir" all the time, so that Rees had to tell him he was a democratic man, and told him to sit down while he made out the receipt.

And it was the strange, awkward, careful way that old Shone sat on the fireside chair which made Rees suspicious.

The next Sunday he knew for certain. For the first time in twenty years old Shone came to ten o'clock Communion. And it was the Rector himself who led him gently out from the church and down the path between the green churchyard grass, even as the great church clock struck ten.

* * *

BEHIND THE COUNTER

The sociable art of buying and selling has been a blessing to writers throughout the ages, an inexhaustible source of picturesque material. Can you identify the nine shopkeepers in our collection? Allow one point for recognizing each shopkeeper, one for the author, and one for the source: twenty-seven in all. The answers are on page 113.

1. *Tea in bright green canisters, comfits in tumblers, and the kindly unaccustomed shopkeeper sitting behind the counter, knitting her elaborate pair of garters!*
2. *This pompous, forked-bearded merchant on the high saddle was apparently not above black-market dealings in foreign exchange . . .*
3. *"She bakes such stunning murphies," he said, "we'll have a penn'orth each for tea."*
4. *Apples and quinces, bloom-down-cheeked peaches, sweet to tongue and sound to eye—and the wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men, hobbling down the glen.*
5. *The shop they kept was, among other things, a toy-shop. It was also a stationer's shop with a touch of haberdashery about it, and there was a hint of picture-frames, and fire-screens, and fishing-tackle, and air guns, and bathing-suits, and tents . . .!*
6. *There were glass cupboards in the rich shop in the town, full of pretty things, but the old lady could not see so well. "I suppose those are patent leather," she said.*
7. *Gloves as sweet as damask roses, masks for faces and for noses . . . Pins and poking-sticks of steel, what maids lack from head to heel . . .*
8. *There were suits of mail standing like ghosts in armour here and there . . . Tapestry and strange furniture that might have been designed in dreams. And nothing that looked older than the little old man himself.*
9. *His window was lined as usual with all kinds of masks—beautiful masks with pink cheeks, and absurd masks with protuberant chins—and the fat little mask-maker, with bald head and varnished shoes, sat sunning himself in the doorway.*

★*The romantic legend of Paul Gauguin dies hard in a workaday world—the respectable stockbroker, a model husband who, overnight, changed into an inhuman monster, deserting his family for ever, obsessed with a sudden, inexplicable urge to paint, and, hey presto! off to Tahiti to live and love and die like a savage!*

A pity to spoil a story like this with sober truth; the true Gauguin, the man who, all his life, had dabbled with bright paints, who used his wife's best linen tablecloths for canvas, and who finally started his new life with her full approval.

Argosy presents this fragment from the artist's own writings, revealing the real-life Gauguin, a man who combined warmth and cynicism, immense vitality and a hatred of sham, with the quality we know as genius

FISHING SEASON

by PAUL GAUGUIN

SINCE about a fortnight there have been swarms of flies, which are rare at other times, and they have become insupportable.

But the Maoris rejoice. The bonitoes and tunny fish are coming to the surface. The flies proclaim that the season for fishing is at hand, the season of labour. But let us not forget that on Tahiti work itself is pleasure.

Everyone was testing the strength of his lines and hooks. Women and children with unusual activity busied themselves in dragging nets, or long grates of coconut leaves, upon the seashore, and the corals which occupied the sea bottom between the land and the reefs. By this method certain small bait fish of which the tunny fish are very fond are caught.

After the preparations have been completed, which takes not less than three weeks, two large pirogues are tied together and launched upon the sea. They are furnished at the prow with a very long rod, which can be quickly raised by means of two lines fixed behind. The rod is supplied with a hook and bait. As soon as a fish has taken the bait, it is drawn from the water and stored in the boat.

We set out upon the sea on a beautiful morning and soon were beyond the line of reefs. We ventured quite a distance out into the open sea. I saw a turtle with the head above water, watching us pass.

The fishermen were in a joyful mood, and rowed lustily.

We came to a spot which they called "tunny hole," where the sea is very deep, opposite the grottoes of Mara.

There, it is said, the tunny fish sleep during the night at a depth inaccessible to the sharks.

A cloud of seabirds hovered above the hole on the alert for tunnies. When one of the fish appeared, the birds dashed down with unbelievable rapidity, and then rose again with a ribbon of flesh in the beak. Thus everywhere in the sea and in the air, and even in our pirogues, carnage is contemplated or carried out.

When I ask my companions why they do not let a long line down to the bottom of the "tunny hole," they reply to me that it is impossible, since it is a sacred place.

"The god of the sea dwells there."

I suspect that there is a legend behind this, and without difficulty I succeed in getting them to tell it to me.

Roiia Hatou, a kind of Tahitian Neptune, slept here at the bottom of the sea.

A Maori was once foolhardy enough to fish here, and his hook caught in the hair of the god, and the god awoke.

Filled with wrath, he rose to the surface to see who had the temerity to disturb his sleep. When he saw that the guilty one was a man, he decided that all the human race must perish to expiate the impiety of one. By some mysterious indulgence, however, the author himself of the crime escaped punishment.

The god ordered him to go with all his family upon Toa Marama, which according to some is an island or mountain, and according to others a pirogue or an "ark."

When the fisher and his family had gone to the designated place, the waters of the ocean began to rise. Slowly they covered even the highest mountains, and all the living perished except those who had taken flight upon (or in) Toa Marama.

Later they repeopled the islands.

We left the "tunny hole" behind us, and the master of the pirogue designated a man to extend the rod over the sea and cast out the hook. We waited long minutes, but not a bite came.

It was now the turn of another oarsman; this time a magnificent tunny fish bit and made the rod bend downwards. Four powerful arms raised it by pulling at the ropes behind, and the tunny appeared on the surface. But simultaneously a huge shark leaped across the waves. He struck a few times with his terrible teeth, and nothing was left on the hook except the head.

The master gave a signal. I cast out the hook.

In a very short time we caught an enormous tunny. Without paying much attention to it, I heard my companions laughing and whispering among themselves. Killed by blows on the head, the animal quivered in its death agony in the bottom of the boat. Its body was transformed into a gleaming many-faceted mirror, sending out the lights of a thousand fires.

The second time I was lucky again.

Decidedly, the Frenchman brought good luck. My companions joyously congratulated me, insisted that I was a lucky fellow, and I, quite proud of myself, did not make denial.

But amid all this unanimity of praise, I distinguished, as at the time of my first exploit, an unexplained whispering and laughter.

The fishing continued until evening.

When the store of small bait fish was exhausted, the sun lighted red flames on the horizon, and our pirogue was laden with ten magnificent tunny fish. They were preparing to return.

While things were being put in order, I asked one of the young fellows the meaning of the whispered words and laughter which had accompanied my two captures. He refused to reply. But I was insistent, knowing very well how little power of resistance a Maori has and how quickly he gives in to energetic pressure.

Finally he confided to me. If the fish is caught with the hook in the lower jaw—and both my tunnies were thus caught—it signifies that the *vahina* is unfaithful during the *tane's* absence.

I smiled incredulously.

And we returned.

Night falls quickly in the tropics. It is important to forestall it. Twenty-two alert oars dipped and redipped simultaneously into the sea, and to stimulate themselves the rowers uttered cries in rhythm with their strokes. Our pirogues left a phosphorescent wake behind.

I had the sensation of a mad flight. The angry masters of the ocean were pursuing us. Around us the frightened and curious fish leaped like fantastic troupes of indefinite figures.

In two hours we were approaching the outermost reefs.

The sea beats furiously here, and the passage is dangerous on account of the surf. It is not easy to steer the pirogue correctly. But the natives are skilful. Much interested, and not entirely without fear, I followed the operation, which was executed perfectly.

The land ahead of us was illumined with moving fires. They were enormous torches made of the dry branches of the coconut trees. It was a magnificent picture. The families of the fishermen were awaiting us on the sand on the edge of the illumined water. Some of the figures remained seated and motionless; others ran along the shore waving the torches; the children leaped hither and

thither, and their shrill cries could be heard from afar.

With powerful movement the pirogue ran up on the sand.

Immediately they proceeded to the division of the booty.

All the fish were laid on the ground, and the master divided them into as many equal parts as there were persons—men, women, and children—who had taken part in the fishing for the tunnies or in the catching of the little fish used for bait.

There were thirty-seven parts.

Without loss of time, my *vahina* took the hatchet, split some wood, and lighted the fire while I was changing clothes and putting on something warm on account of the evening chill.

One of our two parts was cooked; her own Tehura put away raw.

Then she asked me about the various happenings of the day, and I willingly satisfied her curiosity. With childlike contentment she took pleasure in everything, and I watched her without letting her suspect the secret thoughts which were occupying me. Deep down within me, without any plausible cause, a feeling of disquietude had awakened which it was no longer possible to calm. I was burning to put a certain question to Tehura, a certain question . . . and it was vain for me to ask of myself, "to what good?" I, myself, replied, "Who knows?"

The hour of going to bed had come, and, when we were stretched out side by side, I suddenly asked: "Have you been sensible?"

"Yes."

"And your lover today, was he to your liking?"

"I have no lover."

"You lie. The fish has spoken."

Tehura raised herself and looked fixedly at me. Her face had imprinted upon it an extraordinary expression of mysticism and majesty and strange grandeur with which I was unfamiliar and which I would never have expected to see in her naturally joyous and still almost childlike face.

The atmosphere in our little hut was transformed. *I felt that something sublime had risen up between us.* In spite of myself, I yielded to it, and I was waiting for a message from above. I did not doubt that this message would come.

Tehura softly crept to our door to make sure that it was tightly shut, and having come back as far as the centre of the room, she spoke aloud this prayer:

Save me! Save me!
It is evening, it is the evening of the gods!
Watch close over me, O my God!
Watch over me, O my Lord!

Preserve me from enchantments and evil counsels.
Preserve me from sudden death,
And from those who send evil and curses ;
Guard me from quarrels over the division of the lands,
That peace may reign about us !
O my God, protect me from raging warriors !
Protect me from him who in erring threatens me,
Who takes pleasure in making me tremble,
Against him whose hairs are always bristling !
To the end that I and my soul may live,
O my God !

When she had finished her prayer, she came over to me and said, with her eyes full of tears :

" You must strike me, strike me many, many times."

In the profound expression of this face and in the perfect beauty of this statue of living flesh, I had a vision of the divinity conjured up by Tehura.

Let my hands be eternally cursed if they will raise themselves against a masterpiece of nature !

Thus naked, the eyes tranquil in the tears, she seemed to me robed in a mantle of orange-yellow purity. She repeated :

" You must strike me, strike me many, many times ; otherwise you will be angry for a long time and you will be sick."

I kissed her.

And now that I love without suspicion and love her as much as I admire her, I murmur these words of Buddha to myself :

" *By kindness you must conquer anger ; by goodness evil ; and by the truth lies.*"

That night was divine, more than any of the others—and the day rose radiant.

Early in the morning her mother brought us some fresh coconuts.

With a glance she questioned Tehura. She *knew*.

With a fine play of expression, she said to me :

" You went fishing yesterday. Did all go well ? "

I replied : " I hope soon to go again."

* * *

GUARANTEED

" Mohamedsman, hair-cutter and clean-shaver. Gentlemen's throats cut with very sharp razors with great care and skill. No irritating feeling afterwards. A trial solicited."

Advertisement in an Indian newspaper

WORLD'S END

In the fabulous city where all roads meet

" How many miles to Babylon ? "
" Three score and ten."
" Can I get there by candle-light ? "
" Yes ! If your legs are long."

Old English Game Song

Journey's End

It is by candlelight one enters Babylon ; and all roads lead to Babylon, provided it is by candlelight one journeys . . . She, too, is the haven desired of " everyone that saileth any whither " by reason of her costliness, her merchandise of gold and precious stones and pearls, of fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, thyine wood and ivory, cinnamon and incense, wine and souls of men ; and this Babylon too will have fallen when the sound of the flute is no more heard in her, and " the light of a candle shall shine no more at all."

All languages are spoken in Babylon, yet with the same accent ; here are gateways of the Moors in Spain, Venetian waterways, streets of Old Paris, and over all the undiscerning twilight. All men meet in Babylon who go on pilgrimages, for all roads end in Babylon, the Road of the San Graal, the Road of the Secret Rose.

HELEN WADDELL, *Introduction to* Lyrics from the Chinese

Traveller's Tale

I, Chang P'ing-Tzu, had traversed the Nine Wilds and seen
their wonders,
In the eight continents beheld the ways of Man,
The Sun's procession, and the orbit of the Stars,
The surging of the dragon, the soaring of the Phœnix in
his flight.
In the red desert to the south I sweltered,
And northward waded through the wintry burghs of Yu.
Through the Valley of Darkness to the west I wandered,
And eastward travelled to the Sun's extreme abode,
The stooping Mulberry Tree.

CHANG HENG, *A.D.* 78-139, *translated by* Arthur Waley

Strange Country

"When I set out on my long journey," said Tuflongbo to the Fairy Queen, "I took the south road through Shineland, meaning to pass by the country of the Picknickers who work in the mines. But I gave that up because a magpie I met foretold ill-luck if I went there, and leaving that route, I turned off to the west, and travelled on till I came to World's End, which is bounded by a high brick wall. When I saw the wall my heart failed me, though at that very moment I was on the very eve of the proudest day of my life!

Over the wall grew a stout trailing plant, with a five-peaked glossy leaf, and clusters of dark purple berries; and up it I climbed till I had gained the top, and through tears of joy beheld a strange country stretching beyond. As my eyes grew clear again, imagine my delight at seeing in the plain below me a vast body of men in blue aprons. What do you think they were doing? Cutting up the old Moons and making Stars of them!"

The Strange Journey of Tuflongbo

Sudden Elysium

At the end of all wrong roads I came
To the gates of the garden without a name.
There, till the spell should fail, I found
Sudden Elysium, strange with sound
Of unknown birds and waters wild
With voices unresolved for rest.
There every flower was fancy's child,
And every tree was glory's guest;
And love, by darkness undefiled,
Went like the sun from east to west.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

Acid Test

The traveller must be himself, in men's eyes, a man worthy to live under the bent of God's heaven, and were it without a religion: he is such who has a clean human heart and long-suffering under his bare shirt; it is enough, and though the way be full of harms, he may travel to the ends of the world . . .

CHARLES DOUGHTY, 1843-1925, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*

For the Dreamer

. . . When Man has arrived at a certain ripeness in intellect any one grand and spiritual passage serves him as a starting-post towards all 'the two-and-thirty Palaces.' How happy is such a voyage of conception, what delicious diligent Indolence! A doze upon a sofa does not hinder it, and a nap upon Clover engenders ethereal finger-pointings—the prattle of a child gives it wings, and the converse of middle-age a strength to beat them—a strain of music conducts to 'an odd angle of the Isle,' and when the leaves whisper it puts a girdle round the earth.

JOHN KEATS, 1795-1821, *in a letter*

Passage Perilous

Perseus walked across the Ister dry-shod, and away through the moors and fens, day and night, toward the bleak north-west, turning neither to the right hand nor the left, till he came to the Unshapen Land, and the place which has no name.

And seven days he walked through it, on a path which few can tell; for those who have trodden it like least to speak of it, and those who go there again in dreams are glad enough when they awake; till he came to the edge of the everlasting night, where the air was full of feathers, and the soil was hard with ice; and there at last he found the three Gray Sisters, by the shore of the freezing sea, nodding upon a white log of drift-wood, beneath the cold white winter moon; and they chaunted a low song together . . .

CHARLES KINGSLEY, 1819-1875, *The Heroes*

Furious Fancies

With a heart of furious fancies,
Whereof I am commander:
With a burning spear,
And a horse of air,
To the wilderness I wander;

With a Knight of ghosts and shadows,
I summoned am to Tourney:
Ten leagues beyond
The wide world's end;
Methinks it is no journey.

Author Unknown, Seventeenth Century

FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

**"I think we'll call it the Ark," he said,
"Noah's Ark!"**

by A. A. MILNE

WE are told that Lamech was 182 years old when he begat Noah, and that he lived 595 years afterwards. So we are not surprised when we read that "*all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years: and he died.*" It is just what we should have expected. But the next verse gives us material for more sustained thought. It says, "*And Noah was* 500 *years old; and Noah begat Shem, Ham and Japheth.*"

Now it is improbable that this verse is meant to convey two independent items of news, for then the chronicler is merely telling us in the first one that at some time in his career Noah was 500, which we could have worked out for ourselves, remembering that he was 595 when his father died. But if, as therefore seems likely, the two statements are related, then he is giving us the really interesting information that at the age of 500 Noah begat triplets. As he says, a few verses later, "*There were giants in those days.*"

The present chronicler, however, finding it difficult to distinguish in his mind between a hearty, middle-aged man of 500 and an elderly gentleman of 840, and suspecting that it is arithmetic rather than nature that has changed so remarkably since those days, has thought it better to divide patriarchal ages by ten, in the hope of so arriving at some picture of the truth. He proposes, therefore, to regard Noah as a man of sixty when he entered the ark, and the ages of his sons as some twenty-eight, twenty-four, and twenty years.

Since the old chronicler has said little of the women, the present one, wishing to say more of them, would remind his readers that the name of Noah's wife was Hannah, of Shem's Kerin, of Ham's Ayesha, and of Japheth's Meribal. Now we can begin.

Noah was accustomed to dream at night, and to recount his dreams to the family over the breakfast table. These dreams were either straightforward prophecies of ill-fortune, or were so oblique that they could only be interpreted accurately after the event. For example, if a plague of locusts destroyed his crops, he would remind the family complacently of his dream a month earlier, wherein he

had emptied a bottomless well with a sieve, acknowledging that he had misinterpreted this at the time as meaning that his second son would come to no good. Noah never did like Ham much. Ham *would* argue.

One night Noah had a peculiarly vivid dream. He dreamed that the Tigris and the Euphrates had joined together and rushed at him and that he and Ham were sitting on a log in the middle of the waters, and Ham was saying, "Why didn't you dream about this, and then we could have built a boat and saved my mother and my brothers, and my brothers' wives?" And, as an afterthought, he had added, "And Ayesha." And then Ham had turned into a crocodile, and the crocodile said, "What about *my* wife?" And suddenly many animals were saying, "And what about *our* wives?" But he wasn't sitting on a log, he was sitting on the top branch of a cypress tree, sawing it off so as to build a boat, and suddenly he found, to his horror, that he was sitting on the wrong side of the branch.

He gave a great cry as he fell, and his wife awoke and said, "Who is it?" and lo! it was a dream. So he said, "Just a dream, dear. I'll tell you in the morning." But he lay awake for three hours pondering it, at the end of which time he had forgotten that it was a dream.

He fell asleep again as the day was breaking, and this time Yahweh Himself spoke to him, and now all was clear in his mind.

"Shem, my boy," Noah said at breakfast, "what did you think of doing this morning?"

Shem was his favourite son. He was strong and willing; he could do anything with his hands, and had very little brains to do anything else with; so he could be trusted to do what he was told without arguing.

Ham was cynical and unsatisfactory. He didn't seem to believe any of the things that were commonly believed; among them that a father was the embodiment of wisdom, and should be honoured even when he differed from you.

Japheth had just got married to Meribal, and Meribal had just got married to Japheth. They sat together and thought together and walked together, and neither of them had said "I" for six months, but always "we." They were regarded as a temporary but total loss to the establishment.

Before Shem could collect in his mind the facts with which to answer his father, Noah went on, "Well, I want you to put all that to one side and help me build a boat. Ham, no doubt, will now wish to ask me why a boat, seeing that the only water we have here is a well. Ham, my boy?"

"My dear Father," said Ham, raising his eyebrows in that way

he had, "it never occurred to me to ask you why a boat. On the contrary, I have always thought that the one thing this farm lacked was a boat. Really, we ought to have one boat each. Seven boats," he explained, looking at Japheth-and-Meribal. "You never know when a nice boat might be useful."

"You have spoken a true word there, Ham. You never know when a boat might be useful."

Hannah, scenting trouble between them again, said, "Oh, you were going to tell us about your dream, dear. Was it about boats this time? I don't think you have ever dreamed about boats before."

"I have had no occasion to, Hannah. But on the eve of the most terrible catastrophe in History, when a Great Flood is about to cover the face of the earth and destroy all the peoples thereon, I have been mercifully forewarned, and instructed what to do."

The family took it calmly, as if all that was to be expected from this dream was that a sheep would fall into the well. As a matter of academic interest, Ham wanted to know where the water was coming from.

"Where everything comes from, my son," said Noah sternly. "From Heaven."

"Amen," said Hannah, feeling vaguely that it was called for.

"Oh, you mean it's going to rain?"

"For forty days and forty nights, until the waters cover even the crest of Ararat."

"And we shall all be in our boat."

"Not only we, but representatives of all the animals in the world, two of each, male and female."

Japheth-and-Meribal had a secret smile for this.

"What's the idea?" asked Ham.

"As I understand it, Yahweh is weary of the wickedness of the world, and intends to destroy every living creature on it, with the exception of this household, and these—er—specimen animals I was telling you about. We, or perhaps I should say I, have been fortunate enough to find favour in His sight."

"And what happens afterwards, or do we live in our boat for ever?"

"When the waters subside, we shall all start again and found a new generation."

"We eight and all the animals?"

"Yes."

Ham looked at Ayesha and said, "Fancy that!" Ayesha looked away from him and said nothing.

"It seems rather a roundabout way of doing things," said Hannah. "You don't mean that I've got to start again, too?"

Noah ignored the question, and said sternly, "Woman, do you dare to tell the Lord Yahweh how to do things?"

"Mercy, no. I just said it seemed rather a roundabout way of doing them."

Japheth and Meribal had been whispering and laughing together, and now Meribal said, "Daddy Noah, we want to ask you, are you going to save two scorpions?"

"Certainly, my child. Yahweh makes no exceptions."

"We think," said Japheth, "that you ought to give scorpions a miss. We think that if Meribal's father and mother are going to be drowned, it is rather unflattering to save the lives of two scorpions. Couldn't you leave them out? Say you couldn't catch them, or got two males by mistake, or something?"

"What's the difference between a male scorpion and a female scorpion?" asked Ham. "Does anybody know?"

"I thought," said Noah coldly, "that I had explained the facts of life to you on the night before your marriage."

"Oh, was *that* what you were doing?" said Ham, a little surprised. "I thought—well, anyhow, we never touched on scorpions." He glanced at his wife, and added, "It didn't seem necessary then." Ayesha flashed a look of hate at him, and dropped her eyes.

"Isn't one bigger than the other?" asked Hannah. "Or is it smaller?"

"It might be younger, Mother," Shem pointed out.

"Well," said Hannah, "I can't see that Yahweh would mind very much if we all started again without scorpions."

"He *would* mind. Very much," said Noah.

"So would the scorpions," said Ham. "Don't forget that."

"So would Father and Mother," said Meribal brightly, making, she felt, a good point.

"Aren't you glad you married into our family?" Japheth asked her, kissing her nose. Meribal took a quick look round the room and bit his ear.

"All these matters," said the Patriarch importantly, "sink into insignificance beside the problem of building the boat. Obviously it will have to be a big one to contain all these animals. My instructions are that it shall be 450 feet long, 75 feet broad, and 45 feet high."

Shem gasped. Hannah said, "Gracious!" Japheth whistled.

Ham said negligently. "Oh, would you call that a big boat, Father?"

Though the Patriarchs had seen to it that the lowly position of Woman in the Home was established by Divine Law, it is doubtful

if Woman's authority differed very much from that which her glorious emancipation has since given her. Hannah, it may be said, frequently confused Noah with Yahweh, and, regarding them both as children, felt it her duty to do what she could for them.

"Just a moment, dear, before you go off to your tree-cutting," she said after breakfast.

"What is it, Hannah? All right, Shem, collect the men and meet me at the Well Gate."

"Yes, Father." Shem shouldered his axe and strode off.

"Now, dear?" Noah said to Hannah.

"All this about the boat—"

"I think we'll call it the Ark. Yes, I remember now that that is what Yahweh called it. The Ark."

"You really do believe it? You know, dear, sometimes your dreams—there was that prophecy of yours that Ham was going to be struck by lightning—"

"If you remember, my love," said Noah patiently, "Ayesha had a miscarriage shortly afterwards, which is exactly what the grief and shock would have caused, if Ham *had* been struck by lightning. There was nothing wrong with the prophecy, I just didn't follow the implications far enough."

Even now Noah could surprise his wife. She looked at him pityingly. How anybody over the age of five could suppose that Ayesha— Couldn't he see how it was between them?

"You do believe in this Flood, then?"

"I was never more certain."

"Naturally there will be preparations to make if we are all to live in this Ark for—how many days did you say?"

"The actual rains will last forty days. But then, of course, the water has to go down again. I don't know how long that will take. It might well be a year before normal conditions are restored."

"A year's provisioning for eight people and all those animals! Have you any idea of how many kinds of animals there are, and what they all eat?"

"N—no," said Noah cautiously. "I shall—er—" he brightened up, and ended, "I shall leave that to Ham. We must all do our share."

"They won't bring their own food with them?"

"I—er—no. Don't think, my dear," he added hastily, "that I don't appreciate the enormous responsibility which this command of Yahweh's has placed upon you."

"As long as you appreciate it, that's all I ask of you. It's just that, if some of the rarer animals, of whose habits we know so little, do happen to find themselves running short at the end of the tenth month, I don't want you to say, 'How like Hannah'!"

"My dear, I shouldn't dream of saying it."

"You dream of so many strange things, Noah, that that might well be one of them. Very well, dear, now run along and get your axe. Shem will be waiting for you."

When he had gone, she went in to Kerin and said, "It's serious this time."

And now even the neighbours were beginning to take it seriously.

"You seem to be building something," said Nathaneel one day. He was an observant man.

"Yes," said Noah, wiping away the sweat, which was running into his eyes.

"You won't have much wood left if you go on like this."

"No."

"What's the idea?"

Nathaneel was the thirty-second person who had said, "What's the idea?" and Noah was now a little tired of it. He said, "Oh, just an idea," and went on sawing.

"If I blink my eyes rapidly and then look away, I get a curious sensation of a house of some sort. Would that be right?"

"Yes."

"Bit big for a house, isn't it? But perhaps you are expecting an addition to the family?"

"Yes."

"Ah, that's good. I like to see young people—" He was about to say "enjoying themselves," but substituted "realizing their civic responsibilities."

"Yes," said Noah.

Nathaneel felt that he was doing most of the work. However, he had now arrived at the point towards which he had been working.

"As I was saying, you will be running out of wood at this rate. I could let you have a couple of acres of cypress, if it interested you."

"The north wood?" asked Noah, straightening up and showing interest.

"Yes. A nice piece—a little over two acres."

"What do you want for it?"

"You've got some good-looking sheep," said Nathaneel cautiously.

"I daresay we could do something on those lines," said Noah. The fact that all his sheep but two were doomed, anyway, offered, he thought, a good basis for bargaining. The fact that Nathaneel was equally doomed might also be worked in somehow: post-dating delivery or something.

"Come along to my place tonight," said Nathaneel, "and we'll talk it over."

Noah nodded a little condescendingly. It was hard not to be condescending when the Lord has told you that you are the only man in the world worth saving. The only man, that is, with a beard.

"How are you getting on?" Ham asked his brother at dinner some weeks later.

"Oh, all right," said Shem.

"If you worked as diligently as your brother," said Noah, "your elder brother," he explained, glancing at Japheth-and-Meribal, who were still one, "then you would be getting on all right, too. You are responsible for the animals—and so far you seem to have done nothing."

"On the contrary," said Ham, scratching his elbow, "I have collected a flea. Whether male or female, I cannot say. But it's a start."

"Tchah!" said Noah through his beard.

"Well, there's one thing," said Hannah, "with all these animals I needn't provide food for the fleas."

"That's just what I wanted to ask you, Father. Don't imagine that I have been idle. I have been thinking. And, believe me, this needs a great deal more thought than anybody has yet given it."

It was so obvious that "anybody" included Yahweh, that Hannah was frightened. You never knew with Yahweh. He was so easily offended, and *so* impulsive. She hastened to substitute herself for "anybody," saying that she had had to think about it a great deal, with all that food to provide.

"Exactly the point, Mother. Father insists that there must be two of everything. One male, one female. No more, no less."

"Yahweh insists," corrected Noah.

"Quite so. But some of these animals eat each other. If we are to satisfy a couple of lions for a year, we want more than two gazelles. Otherwise you will end up with no gazelles and no lions. Lions, I have estimated, want about a gazelle a day each. So, merely looking at it from the lions' point of view, we shall have to start with 730 gazelles."

"Yahweh distinctly said two only," repeated Noah obstinately.

"Take it or leave it," shrugged Ham. "Why should I mind either way?"

Noah scratched at his beard. ("There is the other flea," Japheth whispered to Meribal, and they both giggled.) "The solution is obvious," he said, as soon as he had thought of it. "There is always a way if you look for it. Dead meat. Yahweh

said nothing against dead meat." He looked around at them triumphantly. There was a heavy silence.

"I am only a woman," said Hannah very clearly, "and my one desire is to obey the Lord's and my husband's commands. But if I *should* be offered the choice of drowning comfortably with my friends, or living for a year in a box with 730 dead gazelles—"

"Oh, why don't we *all* drown, and have done with it!" cried Ayesha, passionately. Amazingly, she burst into tears and rushed from the room. Ayesha! Ham felt a sudden lightening at his heart. If she were unhappy, too—! He started up to follow her. But what was the good? She would only say, "Oh, leave me alone!" He sat down again, but still with that strange excited feeling. Ayesha!

Noah said bitterly, "I have walked with the Lord all the days of my life. I have obeyed His testimonies. If the commands of the Lord are now to be as naught with my own people, then it were indeed better that we should all drown."

"Yes, dear," said his wife soothingly, patting his hand, "but we shan't. Not when you've built that nice boat."

"Ark."

"Yes, dear, Ark. That boat you're building so cleverly."

Ham said, choosing his words carefully, "Nobody would be so foolish as to set up his wisdom against that of the Creator of All Things. But if He seems to have given us an order that no man can possibly carry out, do we not follow the path of wisdom by telling ourselves that the order cannot have been fully heard, fully understood, fully interpreted?"

Noah combed his beard with his fingers, saying nothing.

"May we speak, Father?" asked Japheth, holding up his hand.

"Yes, my son, let us all speak."

"Well, we've been talking it over, and what we think is this: Fleas! You can't have the Ark full of all sorts of furry animals, and only have two fleas. Then think of flies. *Flies!* Can you see Ham examining all the million flies in the ark until he has got one boy-fly and one girl-fly—" (Meribal giggled) "and then trying to catch and kill all the others? Think of birds. You can let two of each in by the front door, but what of the hundreds that settle on the roof? Cats! How many kittens are you letting yourself in for? And how can Ham be sure of finding all the animals, anyway? There may be a particular sort of rare beetle, which lives in a hole at the top of a mountain a hundred miles from here—what does he do about that one?"

"I shall be up there, anyway," said Ham, "getting that second eagle."

Noah was silent. There was nothing to say. He looked up

and saw that Shem seemed to be in trouble with an idea.

"Well, my boy?"

"I was just thinking—if we didn't have all those animals, it would mean a much smaller Ark, and we could do with the wood we've got."

Noah nodded.

"Kerin? Have you any contribution to make?"

"May we just say one more thing, Father?" Japheth interrupted.

"Well?"

"We just want to know. When the flood is at its height, and Meribal's father and mother drift past us on a barrel, what do we do? Wave?"

"Kerin? You were going to say—?"

Japheth, realizing that he had been snubbed, restored confidence in himself by pointing out to Meribal what an unanswerable point he had made. She agreed, and kissed his nose.

Kerin was fair, and her hair came down in two plaits over her shoulders. She was very beautiful. Not dangerously, frighteningly beautiful, like the dark and passionate Ayesha, but tranquilly beautiful, as if she knew what she was and where she wanted to go.

"In the end," she said slowly, "we have to trust to our own minds and hearts and consciences. If it be Yahweh's will to destroy the whole world, then we can neither help Him nor hinder Him. But if He gives us, and us alone, the opportunity of saving ourselves, then we must use all our efforts to save ourselves—efforts not only of body but of mind and judgment. Our judgment may be wrong, but we shall have done our best, and nothing that we do or leave undone can alter His plans for the world."

They were all against him. All!

"I think, dear, if I may speak again—"

"Yes, Hannah?"

"Wouldn't it be better to wait until you have had *another* dream, one in which things are made *much* clearer?"

Even Hannah!

"I cannot have dreams made to order, Hannah. I cannot summon Yahweh to speak to me."

"No, dear, but I have noticed that that sort of thing so often happens after you have been eating Lebanon honey. Kerin, dear, you will find the jar on the top shelf of the larder. Would you mind? Just put a little on his plate."

In the end, Noah did what man always ends by doing. He compromised. He had Divine Authority for this; that is to say, he put the difficulty before Yahweh when he went to bed, talked

it over with Hannah until they both went to sleep, and in the morning came to a decision. No man could have done more.

"About the animals," he said at breakfast.

"And Meribal's father and mother," murmured Japheth.

"I have now received clearer guidance." (Hannah looked across at Kerin and nodded.) "The wisdom of the Lord is too deep for the mortal mind to comprehend at the first instruction, and in submitting his own imperfect wisdom for so much of the Divine wisdom as he does not understand, Man may fall into grievous error."

He paused a moment, as if for comment, but because it was not quite clear whether reverent assent or polite dissent was called for, nobody said anything.

"As should have been plain to you all from the first, my reference to animals was to domestic animals only. If it be Yahweh's will to destroy all evil men, must it not be equally His will to destroy all evil beasts and creeping things? Ham, you should have seen this. Is it not also manifest that among beneficent cattle and sheep no distinction of goodness can be made, and that the numerological reference, the mention of 'two,' applied therefore to the sex, not to the individual? Japheth, my boy, I am surprised that this did not strike *you*. Moreover, Hannah, my dear, it was always obvious, or so I should have supposed, that we could not sustain ourselves unless we had a surplus of living animals from which to replenish our stocks of fresh meat. This of itself would have made the idea of two sheep only"—he waited to get it under full control, and then gave an amused chuckle—"quite ridiculous!"

"Of course, now that you put it so logically, dear, I do see," said Hannah. "Men," she went on to Kerin, "are so much more logical than women. Such a help. Meribal, darling, when I see you eating Japheth's ear, I always feel it is a reflection on my housekeeping. You should keep that in reserve, in case the Flood lasts longer than we expect."

"I have the Divine Authority," announced Noah, a little pompously, "for saying that, after all, we may be back on dry land in as little as eight weeks from the beginning of the rains. Eight weeks, Hannah. Nevertheless," he added, "you should cater for the whole year, so as to be on the safe side."

"Of course, dear," said Hannah. "As you will find later on, Kerin, when you set up house for yourself, it is these little authoritative hints that make housekeeping so much easier."

"Now as to the human element," Noah went on, "and this, of course, includes Meribal's father and mother. Whether owing to my intercession or to His own bounteous mercy (and it is not for me to say), Yahweh has relented towards them. Our friends

and neighbours are to be warned of the Flood, and so to be given a chance of saving themselves."

"Very handsome of Him," said Ham.

"Oh, thank you, Daddy Noah," said Meribal, after being nudged by Japheth, "that *is* kind of you both."

"Do you mean, dear, that they are to be given a chance of saving themselves in *our* boat—"

"Ark."

"—Ark, or a chance of building and stocking one for themselves."

"Well—" said Noah, and left it at that, not being quite sure.

"You do see the difference, dear?" Hannah asked anxiously.

"I think, Hannah, that we might leave that point for the moment. The immediate duty is to warn them."

"Surely by this time," said Ham, "everybody knows why we are building an Ark. Don't they, Shem?"

"They come and ask me, and I tell them, and then they scoff."

"Isn't that good enough, Father?"

"In a general way, yes, my boy, but I feel that in certain cases the situation should be explained in a little more detail."

"To Nathaneel, for instance."

"I wasn't thinking so much of Nathaneel as of Meribal's father and mother."

"I agree," said Hannah, firmly. "I shall call upon your mother this afternoon, Meribal, and make it all *quite* clear to her."

So Hannah called on Meribal's mother. No two people, you would have said, could have been more delighted to see each other. When they had got over their delight, Hannah began, "What lovely weather we are having, but of course we could do with a little more rain."

"I understood," said Meribal's mother archly, "that we were going to have some."

"Oh, you've heard our news?" Hannah laughed. "Forty days and forty nights? Fancy!"

"Is it—official?" asked Meribal's mother, glancing up at the ceiling.

"I'm afraid so. But then everything is that Noah thinks of. It makes things *so* difficult."

"Shobal used to be like that, but I got him out of it."

"You're so clever, Tirzah," sighed Hannah. "If only I had taken it up earlier! But it's too late now, I'm afraid. I shall have to go on saying 'Yes, my dear,' for the rest of my life."

"You don't believe it, of course," asked Tirzah, with the uneasy laugh of one who didn't want to.

"About the Flood?" Hannah's laugh sounded much more

genuine. "Darling, how can you ask? Raining all that time!"

"I said to Shobal, 'Whoever has heard of rain for forty days?'"

"Who, indeed? Oh, but you haven't heard the best of it. With all this rain, there's going to be a Flood that will cover the top of Mount Ararat, and everybody in the whole world is going to be drowned! Isn't it amusing? The things Noah thinks of!"

"Oh, is *that* why you're building that extraordinary box? What did Shobal call it? It made me laugh so. 'Noah's Ark,' that was it." She tittered, and said again, "Noah's Ark! I think that's a wonderful name for it. 'Have you heard about Noah's Ark?' he asked me. I didn't know what he meant."

"My dear," said Hannah grimly," it may be a joke to you and Shobal, but it's no joke to me. I've got to provision that box for a whole year!"

"I thought you said forty days—"

"Yes, but the water has to subside—I think that's the word—and apparently that takes a whole year."

"Hannah! It's crazy!"

"Of course it is, but what can I do?"

"I said to Shobal, when I first heard of it, 'Well, our daughter has married into a crazy family.'"

"I'm afraid she has, poor girl. And such a sweet nature. But, Tirzah, can you imagine us all shut up in that box for a year or more, with as many animals as we can squeeze in?"

"Horrible," said Tirzah with a shudder. "But, of course, if it *doesn't* rain—"

"Oh, but we shall have to go into our box just the same. Noah is determined on that. Just sit there boxed up, and wait for the rain to begin. And then wait for it to stop. And then wait for the rest of the year. And then—Oh, Tirzah, how I envy you your husband; such a nice, sensible man, Shobal, with none of these strange ideas—"

"I'm thinking of Meribal. It's very hard on her."

"It is. Luckily she can't see an inch beyond Japheth's nose at the moment, so she's quite happy. But as for the rest of us, and all those smelly animals—Oh, well, dear, I mustn't bother you with our troubles. It has been lovely to see you."

She got up, laid her cheek against Tirzah's, and moved towards the door. But suddenly she remembered.

"How silly of me, darling!" she laughed. "I had a special message for you from my husband, and I had forgotten all about it! Well, the fact is, I'm ashamed to give it. You'll think I'm making fun of you."

"Oh, go on, Hannah, you know I'm not one to mind."

"Well, do forgive me, dear." She paused, and then went on

quickly, " Tirzah, it's really too absurd, but Noah says that if you and Shobal would like to join us in our box—for the whole year, of course, and I'm *afraid* you'd have to bring your own provisions—men never think of that, but *you* understand, darling—well, you know how delighted we should all be." She took a deep breath and ended, " There ! I've done it ! "

" Oh, dear ! " said Tirzah. " Of course, it's sweet of you, Hannah, but—well, I know Shobal is rather busy this next week or two—and, as a matter of fact, I'm supposed to be out in the open air as much as possible just now. No, nothing serious, but you do see, dear—"

" Of *course*, darling ! Don't think any more of it. But my husband insisted that I ask you, so naturally I had to do it. Good-bye, darling. My love to Shobal, please. Good-bye ! "

So at dinner that night, Hannah said, " I'm afraid it's no good, Meribal, darling. Your father and mother just *won't* believe about the Flood. So foolish of them." She caught Kerin's eye, and added, " I did my best."

" I'm sure you did," smiled Kerin.

The words " father " and " mother " came to Meribal from a long way off. She was smoothing out Japheth's eyebrows for him.

The Ark was nearly finished. The neighbours had stared, and made jokes, and lost interest. Shem was resting for a moment when Kerin came down from the house with a jug of milk in her hands. " You will be thirsty," she said, " and tired. Sit for a little, and talk to me."

" I'm all right," he said. He took the jug from her, and they sat down together.

" How much longer will it be ? "

" Just the roof to finish off," said Shem. He drank and said, " That was good. Well, say three more days."

" And then—? "

" How do you mean ? "

" Then we all go into the Ark together, and there we all are. Together."

He nodded and said, " The same as we have always been."

" Don't I know ? But, even so, you and I have managed to be away by ourselves sometimes. Now, for a whole year—"

" Oh, I expect we shall be all right. Bit crowded at first, perhaps."

" If it is to be for a whole year," began Kerin, " I don't think I—" and then, suddenly, " Shem ! "

" Yes ? "

" Will you promise me something ? "

"Anything I can. Of course."

"When it is all over, will you come away with me?"

"Where?"

"Anywhere, so long as it is a long way, and we are alone."

He looked at her in astonishment.

"Why, what's the matter, Kerin? Aren't you happy with us?"

"I think that husband and wife should be alone together."

"Yes, dear, but with their children. Like Father and Mother."

"No, no," she said urgently, "not with their children, not when the children are grown up."

"It is the custom," said Shem, a little bewildered.

"It is? Then why isn't Meribal with her father and mother? Would you like me to be with mine, if they were alive?" Kerin asked.

"Oh, daughters; no."

"'Oh, daughters; no,'" repeated Kerin. "So you see, children don't have to be with their parents for ever. There is no Divine Law about it."

Shem scratched his head, took another draught of milk, and tried again.

"What's wrong with being all together? I don't understand. Everybody loves you. Who is it who makes you unhappy? I know Mother loves you."

"I like your mother very much. I admire her, and she amuses me a great deal."

"Amuses?" said Shem, shocked by the word. One oughtn't to think of mothers as amusing.

"And, of course, everybody respects your father. He's a dear old man. Sometimes he amuses me, too," she added, with a reminiscent smile.

That word again! "Kerin!" he cried. "I don't know what you're saying!"

"Yes, I like them both very much; I have been very lucky. But you see, dear, I don't *love* anybody but you."

Shem groped his way after her as well as he might, but he was still in darkness. All he found to say was, "I thought we were all so happy together," but he didn't sound very happy.

"All!" she said scornfully. "Ham and Ayesha never speak to each other! Japheth and Meribal are only happy because they can still behave as if the rest of us weren't there. For all they mean to anybody else, they might be gone already."

"You don't want us to behave like Japheth and Meribal?"

"Do you never wish that we did?" she said softly.

Shem turned to her in surprise. He found himself looking into the depths of her deep blue eyes, and was lost. Suddenly he took

her in his arms, crushed her until she could scarcely breathe, and kissed her . . .

" All right, I promise," he said. " Now I must get on with the roof."

Kerin went back to the house singing, swinging the empty jug.

" I have it on High Authority," said Noah that evening, " that the Ark will come to rest on the summit of Mount Ararat. This may not be until the seventeenth day of the seventh month. From that moment the waters will gradually subside.

" And what do *we* do ? " asked Ham.

" We gradually get out, of course," giggled Meribal.

" And there we all are on the top of Ararat," said Japheth. " Mother, how good are you at climbing down a seventeen-thousand-foot mountain ? "

" Not very good, dear. I haven't been practising lately. But I expect to be a little better than some of the cows."

Noah pulled at his beard.

" I may have got that bit about Ararat wrong," he said reluctantly.

" I hope so, dear," said Hannah.

Ham came into his wife's room. She looked round and said coldly, " What do you want ? "

" Not to disturb you," he said. " And not to annoy you ; at least, not before I have begun."

" Begun what ? "

" Saying what I want to say."

" Oh, are we talking again ? " asked Ayesha. " How nice ! It will be the first time in months."

" And it may be the last time for ever. But, perhaps, it was a bad moment to choose. You're packing." He had come to rest at her dressing table, and now, sitting down in front of it, he picked up a carved wooden hairbrush. " I made this for you. Do you remember ? It's rather good." He looked at it appreciatively.

She took it away from him, saying, " Don't muddle things up, please. And wouldn't it be better if you got on with your own packing ? We move in tonight."

" You do, perhaps. I don't."

She was startled. " What do you mean ? " she said, putting the brush down, and backing away from him.

He got up slowly from his seat and said quietly, " Sit down here and brush your hair. It will give you something to do, if you don't want to listen to me. Here ! " He gave her the brush again, and she sat down. " I used to like watching you brush your hair—your serious, so remote face, and the ripple of your arms. But I won't watch you now. You're alone, and I'm alone, and—What

were you asking me? Oh, about the packing. Well, I shall have very little to pack. You see, I'm not going into the Ark."

"You mean you don't believe there's going to be a Flood? You wouldn't, of course."

"Sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't. What I don't believe is that I'm a particularly good person to save. I can't help thinking, Why Ham? I can see why Father and Mother, and why Shem and Kerin; they're good. I am not so sure about Japheth and Meribal, because, when you are as happy as they, it seems to me rather a good time to die, but they are nice children and have never done anybody any harm. And I can see why Ayesha, because beauty, sheer beauty, is the one thing that mustn't be destroyed. But when I think of Ham, then I begin to doubt. Then I begin to feel that it's absurd and wrong to choose a little group of eight people out of the whole world, and to set them above all the rest. There are wicked men on the earth, and I daresay I'm one of them, but not children, not babies. I can't quite believe in a God like that."

"So you're taking a chance?"

"Yes . . . Ayesha, I want you to take a chance with me."

"Why?"

He said, as if to himself, "I should never have dared to ask you. But when you cried, 'Oh, why don't we all drown, and have done with it?' then I knew that you were no happier than I, and that there was still a chance for us. I want you to come with me and take it. To put it in another way," he went on more firmly, "I'm damned if I'm going to live with you in that damned Ark for a whole damned year, watching Japheth and Meribal, and knowing that I love you a hundred times more than he will ever love her, and that, without some help from you, I shall never have the courage to do anything about it."

The brush had ceased its regular motion. There was silence. Then slowly her hand moved again, and, still looking in her mirror, she said, "Stand where I can see you."

He came and stood behind her, a little to one side. They looked at each other in the mirror.

"Is that where you used to stand when you liked watching me brush my hair?" Ayesha asked.

"Yes."

"I don't think you have ever told me that."

"I thought you knew."

"Never think that of me. Never think that I know."

"You know now."

"Yes. All the same, I think that we will go into the Ark together. Just to be safe. Will you mind?"

"Not now."

"Perhaps," she smiled, "Japheth and Meribal will be able to give us a few helpful hints on how two people can be happy."

"I don't think so. I have a very good memory."

"So have I. Oh, so have I!"

"Ayesha!"

"When it is all over, then I promise that we will go off by ourselves—oh, a long, long way—and start that family."

"Thank you, my very lovely one."

"Is your courage coming slowly back?" Ayesha asked.

"Slowly," he nodded.

She turned round to him and said, "Show me."

Under a cloudless sky that evening, they all went into the Ark. After they had seen to the animals, they assembled in their own living-room; and when they were together, Noah said, "Let us now call on the Lord God to bless our enterprise. Let us pray that the light of His countenance may be a shining beacon, our faith in Him a sure shield, through all the perils that confront us."

Young and old, thoughtful and frivolous, believing and unbelieving, they fell upon their knees, each of them in his separate way moved by a sense of his own littleness, the knowledge of his own ignorance.

And, as Noah prayed, it seemed to them that the beating of their hearts kept time to his words, at first gently, then more loudly, until the words were lost in the monotony of its rhythm . . . and they knew that what they heard was just the beating of the rain upon the roof.

* * *

LINES ON AN ELEGIAC THEME

The laundry hath my vest and I have its,
O base exchange, one for the other given!
For mine is wool and furthermore it fits:
There never was a poorer bargain driven.
The laundry hath my vest and I have its!

Its vest on me hangs far below the knee:
My vest on it is elegant and clings.
It keeps my vest: it loves it tenderly
But its to me no warmth or comfort brings.
The laundry hath my vest—I've sent back its.

From *Punch*

ORDER OF CHIVALRY

I WAS the first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.

I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ.
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under Heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, *Idylls of the King*

★*In his exquisite prose translation, from the French of J. C. Mardrus, Powys Mathers whisks us away through the fabled world of Arabian Nights to the colourful city of Baghdad. And here, in the moonlit courts and curtained harems his sheikh keeps the code of Saladin, while the rule of the road is—Love Conquers All.*

CONTEST IN GENEROSITY

Translated by

POWYS MATHERS

IT is related that there were once in Baghdad a girl and boy who were cousins and had greatly loved each other from infancy. Their fathers and mothers had destined them for each other and would often say: "When Habib is big he shall marry Habibah." The two had grown up together and their love had grown with them, but when they came to marriageable age, they were not destined to wed each other; for the girl's parents had suffered the reverse of time and were now so poor that they were obliged to accept the suit of a certain respectable sheikh, one of the richest merchants in Baghdad, when he asked for their daughter's hand.

After the marriage had been arranged, young Habibah sought out her cousin Habib for the last time, and said to him through her tears: "O my beloved, you have heard that my father and mother have given me to a sheikh whom I have never seen, and our love is frustrate for ever. Would not death be preferable?"

"Our Destiny is bitter; there is no meaning in our life henceforward," answered Habib sobbing. "How shall we ever again savour the taste of life or delight in the beauties of the world? Alas, alas, sweet cousin, how shall we bear the weight of Destiny?" They wept together and were well-nigh swooning from unhappiness, when one appeared to separate them and tell the girl the time had come for her to be taken to her husband's house.

The desolate Habibah was carried in procession to the sheikh's house, and there, after the usual blessing and wishings, left alone with him.

When the moment of consummation came, the old man entered the bridal chamber and found his wife weeping among the cushions, her bosom shaken with sobs. "Surely she weeps after the manner of young girls, because she has left her mother," thought the sheikh.

"Happily that does not last long. The stiffest bolt will yield to oil, and a kind word will tame a lion's cub." So he went up to her, saying: "O Habibah, O light of my soul, why do you destroy the beauty of your eyes? What grief is this which makes you forget that I am near you?"

The girl redoubled her tears and sighs when she heard his voice, and thrust her head further among the cushions. "Dear Habibah," said the old man gently, "if you are weeping for your mother, say so, and I will fetch her to you instantly."

The girl shook her head among the cushions, and the old bridegroom went on: "If you are weeping for your father, or one of your sisters, or your nurse, or some pet animal, such as a cock, a cat, or a gazelle, tell me, and you shall be no longer separated from your desire." A shake of the head was the bride's only answer. The sheikh pondered for a moment, and then said again: "Is it the house itself for which you weep, Habibah, the house where you were young? If that is so, I will take you back there at once."

A little won over by her husband's kindness, Habibah lifted her tear-wet eyes and her cheeks with their fevered roses. In a small and trembling voice she answered: "My lord, I do not weep for my mother, my father, my sisters, my nurse, or my pets; and I beg you not to insist that I shall tell you the reason of my tears."

The excellent sheikh, seeing her face for the first time, was softened indeed by her beauty, her childish charm, and the music of her voice. "O fairest girl on earth, dearest Habibah, since the cause of your weeping is none of these things," said he, "I beg you all the more to tell me of it." "I cannot tell you of it," she answered, and he went on: "Then I know what it is: you weep because I am repugnant to you. If you had only told me through your mother that you did not wish to marry me, I should never have forced you into my house."

"No, by Allah," cried the girl, "I have no aversion from you. How could one whom I have never seen be repugnant to me? It is something else, for which I can find no words."

But the old man pressed her so kindly that at last she confessed with lowered eyes: "My grief and tears are for a dear one of my house, a cousin with whom I grew up, a cousin who loves me and whom I love. O my master, love's roots are in the heart and, if love is plucked forth, the heart is plucked forth also."

The sheikh lowered his head without speaking and reflected for an hour, then he raised his head, saying: "Dear mistress, the law of Allah and His Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) forbids one Believer to snatch even a mouthful of bread from another Believer by force. How then could I, a Believer, snatch

away your heart? Calm your dear soul and refresh your eyes, for nothing shall happen to you that is not written in your Destiny. Rise up now, O my bride of a minute, and go, with my full and free consent, to him whose right in you is more than mine. Give yourself to him freely and return here in the morning before the servants are awake. From henceforth you are my daughter, of my own flesh and blood, and a father does not touch his daughter carnally. When I am dead, you shall be my heir. Rise up now, my girl, and hasten to console your cousin, for he must be weeping as the dead weep."

He raised her, dressed her himself in the fair robes and jewels of her marriage, and accompanied her to the door. As she walked into the street and started upon her way, she glowed like an extravagantly ornamented idol, such as the unbelievers carry on their feast days.

She had hardly gone twenty paces down the deserted street when a black form fell upon her from the shadows, and a night-haunting thief, who had been attracted by the sparkle of her gems, began to snatch them from her, growling: "If you open your mouth, I will strike you to the earth."

His hand was already fumbling with the collars about her neck when his eyes fell upon her face. "As Allah lives," he cried, "she is the richest jewel of them all; I must take her whole! Dear mistress, I will do you no harm if you are complaisant, and I can promise you a blessed night if you will come with me," adding, "She must be the wedding guest of some great lord, to wear such things at night!"

When the girl wept, the robber cried: "Why do you weep, my dear? I swear that I will neither hurt you nor rob you, if you give yourself to me freely."

At the same time he took her by the hand and would have led her off; but she found the courage to tell him who she was, how generous the sheikh had been, and the full details of her marriage. "Now, when all was going well, I have fallen into your hands. Do with me as you will," she said.

The robber, who was by far the most skilful craftsman in all the corporation of the city thieves, had sense enough to appreciate the husband's generosity. He reflected for a moment, and then said: "Where does he live, this cousin whom you love?" "In a room on the garden in such a house, in such a street," she answered.

Then said the robber: "Dear mistress, no one shall ever accuse a man of my profession of interfering with true love. May Allah grant the choicest of His blessings to the two of you this

night! I will now lead you to your cousin's house, as you might fall in with some vile thief if you were to go alone. The wind is for all, the flute for one, and that one is not I."

So saying, he took the girl by the hand and escorted her, as if she had been a queen, right up to the house of her beloved. Then he took leave of her, kissing the hem of her garment, and went his way.

The girl walked across the garden and, listening at the window of her cousin's chamber, heard him sobbing alone. She knocked at the door, and a voice filled with tears asked who was there. "Habibah!" she answered.

"O voice of Habibah!" said her cousin. "But Habibah is dead! Who are you that speaks to me in her voice?" "I am Habibah," she answered.

The door opened and Habib fell swooning into his cousin's arms. She brought him to consciousness and, holding his head upon her lap, told him of the conduct of her husband and of the thief.

At first Habib could say no word, then he rose and murmured gently: "Come with me, sweet love." He took her by the hand, touching no more of her, and led her through the streets to the home of her husband.

When the sheikh saw his wife return with young Habib and understood the reason which had brought them, he led them into his chamber and kissed them as a father kisses his own children. "When a Believer has proclaimed his wife to be the daughter of his flesh and blood, no power can give the lie to his words," he said in a grave voice. "You owe me nothing, my children, for I am in bondage to my oath."

So saying, he made over his house and goods to the two of them, and went to live in another city.

* * *

THE ASP

Whenever I behold an asp
I can't suppress a prudish gasp.
I do not charge the asp with matricide,
But what about his Cleopatricide?

OGDEN NASH

THE KEY

It was a narrow crevice, no wider than a man's hand

by JAMES C. LYNCH

THIS was the middle of Bastian's second day without water, and the lava patch where he was trapped caught and reflected the hot fire of the desert sun so that, even in the shade, the heat baked a man dry.

Sheriff McClellan had not fired a shot since early morning, but Bastian knew that the wiry little officer from Desert Centre was still manœuvring around the outer edges of the rock-patch. Twice within the past hour McClellan had ordered him to give up and come out. Both times, Bastian had fired at the sound of the man's voice, determined to fight it out. But now, when he tried and failed to suck moisture from the pores of his mouth, he knew he was licked. All the little sheriff had to do was sit tight and nurse his canteen of water while the man he was waiting for dried up.

Bastian was a primitive man, born to this desert and the dry, barren mountains that hemmed it in. In surviving it successfully, he had come to attach a sort of greatness to himself, never realizing he had only equalled the achievements of particularly vicious animals. All he had gained was a great physical strength and an animal's sharp instincts and slyness. Unschooled, he used intuition for reason and habit for knowledge. For him, the memory of a past experience and a new hunch formed a plan of procedure.

Cautiously studying the bright sky and the distant lift of the blue mountains, half haze-hidden, he deduced something from the feel and look of those things and came to a decision. He scooped a trough in the hot sand between two odd-shaped boulders, laid in his rifle and cartridge belt and pistol, and covered them carefully so that there was no sign of the cache. After that he shouted, " McClellan : I give up. I'm coming out."

McClellan called back, " Let me see your hands come up first, Sam. Come out slow."

Bastian raised his long arms over his head and stood up. The lava patch was barely an acre in extent, and he could see over the highest piece of rock, but, facing the place from which McClellan's

voice had come, he still could not see the man. He could see his own dead saddle horse lying a quarter of a mile out—that was how McClellan had stopped his flight. Closer in lay McClellan's animal. Bastian had killed it to keep the battle even.

"Where are you?" called Bastian. "I'm up."

"I see you," McClellan said quietly, far removed from where he had first acknowledged the surrender. "Turn this way, Sam."

McClellan stood at the edge of the rock patch, the big gun in his hand covering Bastian all the way. He was a head shorter than his prisoner and ten years older, with grave, serene features. Years of trying to do a good job had made him prematurely grey. Some of the things he had looked upon and some of the things he had been forced to do had left their marks on him, too.

When Bastian came within ten feet of him, searching for some sign of weakness or advantage, McClellan moved back ten steps, drawing the bigger man into the open.

"Far enough," he said. "Turn round now, Sam, and hold your hands behind you."

"No call to do that, is there?" said Bastian. "You know me."

McClellan stepped back and said, a little wearily, "What did Tom Evans ever do to you, Sam?"

Bastian ran his tongue over his dry, cracked lips and looked hopefully round. "I could talk better with a little water in my belly."

"So could I," admitted McClellan. "That's what brought me to your place, Sam. I was out of water and wanted to fill my canteen."

"You mean you ain't got any water?"

"That's right, Sam. Not a drop."

"I ought to have killed you when I saw you coming," muttered Bastian. "I don't know why I ran."

"You ran because you felt guilty," said McClellan. "You had just killed a man who had never harmed a soul in his life. Tom was always going out of his way to help somebody. What did you do it for, Sam?"

"Because," said Bastian, thickly, "he was always trying to ram his Bible down my throat. Always talking about God. He was crazy and he was making me the same way. There ain't no God."

"I hope you change your mind before they hang you."

"Nobody is going to hang me," boasted Bastian, looking avidly round again. "Now give me a drink. You're lying about not having water."

"I'm not lying, Sam," McClellan said. "If you had waited five minutes longer, I wouldn't have been here. I would have been

headed for Miner's Well. It will be nice having you along for company, Sam. We'll make it by midnight, if we're lucky."

Bastian tugged at the handcuffs that held his hands behind him and made him helpless. Then he looked into the distance again. "This gets better all the time," he said. "You'll never hang me, McClellan."

"Maybe not," agreed the sheriff. "I'm never sure of anything myself, Sam. All I do is keep trying. Where's your guns?"

"Where I can find them when I come back. You want to waste time looking for them?"

McClellan thought about that for a while, and finally said, "No, let's get going, Sam. And don't try anything. If I don't bring you in, some other sheriff will."

"But he won't know I killed Tom Evans," muttered Bastian. "Only you know that. You just happened along at the right time. In another one of your damned five minutes I would have had Evans buried, and nobody would ever have known."

McClellan grunted. "Maybe that was the doings of that God you don't believe in, Sam."

"It was pure, dumb luck," snorted Bastian. "Before tomorrow morning comes you'll know there ain't no God."

McClellan waved the big man into motion and fell in behind him, and, this way, they headed directly towards the highest peak that loomed cool and inviting, forty miles away. Miner's Well—the only water in between—lay about half the distance.

The physical workings of the thing Bastian had sensed before he surrendered now began to take shape. The high, blue peak by which they set their course, began to shrink and face away from them. The dancing heat columns did not cause this; Bastian knew from experience that it was dust, wind-borne sand, and grit. The desert was beginning to work for its own kind. McClellan could have his God.

Within an hour, a puff of breeze hit them in the face—a feathery touch of moving air far hotter than the normal atmosphere, and acrid with the taint of fine, dry dust. The next gust was harder and longer lasting and carried even more heat. Then, with only that small warning, a heavy wind struck down, shrieking out of the south and sweeping across the vast empty space. The two men had to lean into it, and sometimes a step gained them no distance. The air was filled with flying sand. Landmarks vanished. The desert floor began to crawl and drift.

Bastian turned his head. McClellan plodded along, three yards behind, the big gun hanging in his hand, cocked. The small man's face was grey with fatigue and thirst and his head was tipped down

against the wind—but not so far down that he could not see what went on ahead of him. When Bastian stopped, suddenly, McClellan stopped moving at once, wary and keeping that same distance between them.

Bastian slyly hid his satisfaction. McClellan was afraid of his size and strength, afraid to get close.

"You going to try and keep moving in this?" Bastian shouted.

"Wind's right in our face," McClellan yelled back. "Good a way to find the Well as any."

"What if the wind shifts?"

McClellan shrugged. "That's a chance we've got to take."

Bastian faced the wind and put his feet in motion again. He was completely satisfied; there was no fear in him now and he had the future all worked out. McClellan's decision had freed him as easily as if the man had handed over the keys to the handcuffs and walked away. With the air so full of dust, night would strike down almost as quickly as a man could lift his hand. When that happened, with McClellan afraid to close up with him, he would simply break into a hard, swerving run and leave McClellan there, alone.

The wind would howl all night, and, when dawn came, it would stop, leaving thousands of tons of fine dust suspended in the air. The sun would not shine through, because these winds always pushed great thunderheads of clouds over the mountains. McClellan would be completely lost. If he sat still, he would die before he could see the way to travel. If he tried to move without a landmark or the sun to guide him, he would walk in an endless circle, and die anyway.

While McClellan was dying, Bastian would be heading directly for Miner's Well. He knew he could find it. Once, even made stone-blind by dust, he had found it.

At the well he would sit and drink his fill and wait. When the haze lifted, so the vultures could see, he would watch their flight and follow it and thus find McClellan again. Then he would take McClellan's key and unlock the handcuffs and free himself, and there would be no one left to prove he had ever killed Tom Evans. The wind would even fill Evans' grave.

The sun took its time going down. When the red ball began to flatten on the bottom, Bastian drew in a deep breath. Just as he did, his head exploded in a flash of fire far brighter than the sun, and he lost consciousness.

After a while he became aware again of the wind and of a hot pain behind his eyeballs. He waited for the pain to lessen and, when it did, he raised his lids. "McClellan!" he shouted,

hysterically.

"Right here, Sam." The voice was startlingly close.

"I can't see!" Bastian sat up and scrubbed at his eyes. "I can't see a thing."

"Neither can I," admitted McClellan. "I've never seen a darker night. Sitting right here near you, I can't even see you."

Bastian reasoned this out and became aware of two things at once. It was night and his left hand was free, but his other hand was, somehow, caught. Groping, he found the foot-long chain that held the cuffs together. Running his hand along this he came to the other manacle. It was locked round McClellan's slimmer wrist.

"It was the only thing I could figure to do," McClellan said. "Otherwise, in the dark, you might have got away from me."

Raging, Bastian threw his weight against the smaller man, pinning him down while he pawed for the gun with his free hand.

"I threw it away, Sam," McClellan said. "Wasn't any cartridges in it. I fired my last shot at you, early this morning."

Rearing back, Bastian drove his free fist at the sound of McClellan's voice. He missed the first time. The second time he struck a glancing blow and, in return, took a hard driven fist in his own mouth. His lips split and started to bleed.

"I'm going to kill you, McClellan," he raged. "Give me the key. Give me the key to these damned handcuffs."

"You think I'm a fool?" McClellan asked. "That's why I knocked you cold, Sam—so you wouldn't see where I hid the gun and the key."

Bastian felt McClellan's body with his right hand and worked his fingers up to the little man's throat. And in spite of the twisting, wiry pressure McClellan put against the manacles, Bastian dragged his left hand up to join the other one. "I'll show you about God," he said thickly. "Start praying, McClellan. See if it will do you any good. It didn't work for Evans."

"You'll never make Miner's Well dragging a dead man," McClellan said. "Not even you could do that, Sam."

Holding McClellan down with his left hand, Bastian struck with his right again and again, until the body beneath him lay limp and unmoving. Then he rose and jerked savagely at the manacles, trying to break free, kicking at McClellan's body all the while.

Exhausted, finally, like any trapped animal after its first try at freeing itself, Bastian subsided and went to his knees, making meaningless noises in his throat and investigating the thing that held him prisoner, searching for some kind of relief. Terror mounted in him steadily, until McClellan groaned and tried to sit up, showing he still lived.

Thirst drove Bastian on. He picked the smaller man up in his arms and carried him, staggering into the hard wind, tripping and stumbling over things he could not see. The flying grit found its way into his eyes and scoured his skin raw, but these were but slight discomforts compared to the lack of moisture in his body.

He made a mile before McClellan mumbled, " Put me down."

Bastian stopped and put the little man on his feet. McClellan's knees buckled and he almost fell. Bastian held him erect and thoughtlessly tried to shake some strength into the sheriff. " Try hard," he begged. " Try hard. We got to get there."

" Start moving," McClellan ordered.

Bastian led the way. Relieved of the sheriff's weight, he made better time, but he had to half-drag the man who had outlucked him and out-thought him; and, at times, the frustration that welled up in him made him choke on the filthy phrases he linked with McClellan's name.

During more lucid moments, when his want of water and fear of dying became a paramount thing in his mind, he tried coaxing the sheriff and pleaded with him to hurry. Time was running out fast.

By midnight, McClellan fell every few steps, and neither rage nor pleading could keep him from it. Bastian put his arm round the smaller man and held him erect. Later, they both fell and neither of them could get up.

Dust in his throat made Bastian cough, and that brought him out of a fitful sleep. When he tried to move his right arm, and could not, panic came to him before memory and he cried out.

The sound roused McClellan. He pushed himself to a sitting position and they sat there looking at one another, the lower part of their bodies completely covered by sand that had drifted over them during the night.

McClellan's face was swollen and discoloured. The beating he had taken, the forty-eight waterless hours, and the torture of the driven sand had put a grey pallor under the bronze of his skin. He looked more dead than alive.

Bastian jerked and shook their manacled arms and cursed McClellan over and over for what he had done. When he had exhausted himself, the sheriff said, " Do you know where we are, Sam ? "

" I know," muttered Bastian. " Do you ? "

" No."

" We're so close I could drag you the rest of the way, even if you were dead."

McClellan shrugged. " If I'm dead, it will be your funeral as

well as mine. But, one way or the other, I'm going to get to Miner's Well."

Bastian reached out, ripped the star from McClellan's shirt, and threw it as far as he could. That act seemed to bring him some kind of relief; he pulled the smaller man up with him.

There was no wind and no sun. The suspended dust lay motionless in the air. Visibility was barely more than fifty yards and the floor of the desert was completely changed. Bastian lifted his shaggy head and made a slow turn. When he did move out, his first dozen steps were hesitant. Then he swerved to the right, and, from then on, McClellan almost had to trot to keep the pressure off his lacerated wrist.

Within a half hour, the land began to pitch slightly down, and McClellan knew they were on the slope of a huge, almost imperceptible cone. At the bottom of this shallow cup lay Miner's Well. Bastian moved faster, and the promise of relief gave McClellan the strength to keep up.

When they came to where the well had been, they both stopped and silently stared. At least fifteen feet of drifted sand covered the place—too much ever to dig away before they dried out completely and died.

Where they stood, the wind had done another incongruous thing. There was bare rock showing, where neither of them had ever seen rock before. At their feet, the sand had been blown out of a narrow crevice, very deep and no wider than a man's hand.

Bastian sank slowly down and McClellan sat down beside him. "I ought to kill you," Bastian muttered, "but I won't. I'm going to sit here and listen to you holler for that God of yours to do something about this."

"You won't hear me say anything," McClellan said. "I did my praying last night before I called you out."

Bastian stared at him. "What did you pray for then?"

"For the guts to do what I did."

Bastian jerked at the chain and tore McClellan's wrist again. "You damned fool! Trying to be God Almighty himself, ain't you? Or maybe you were so damned afraid, you had to chain another man to you so you wouldn't die alone. You call that being a Christian?"

"I call it being a sheriff. I caught you and I'm supposed to bring you in, one way or another."

"Yeah? I'll bet you'd sell your soul to Hell, right now, if you could get these handcuffs off."

"You sound like you're afraid to die, Sam," McClellan said.

"Everybody's afraid to die."

McClellan thought awhile and then said, "You're a strong

man, Sam. Suppose I knew a way to unfasten this cuff on my wrist? If I could, would you let me lock your hands behind your back? Maybe you could make it to Desert Centre. It's not more than twenty miles."

"What good would it do me to walk in there wearing handcuffs?" demanded Bastian. "They'd know you put them on me. They'd backtrack me and find you. They'd see the marks I put on you and say I killed you."

"That's right," admitted McClellan. "But they couldn't be sure, because you would deny it. And giving yourself up, that way, they wouldn't hang you. They would just put you in prison. That way you wouldn't die. If you sit here, you will."

Bastian began to breathe faster, and a slyness came over him. "Can you really get these cuffs off?" he asked.

"Yes," said McClellan. "You want to take me up?"

"I've got a better idea," said Bastian. "Take them off and I'll get you out of this, McClellan. I'm strong. I'm stronger than you think I am. I'll carry you to water. I'll get you to Desert Centre. All I ask, when we get there, is that you keep your mouth shut. Evans was nothing to you. He's already dead, and nothing you can do will bring him back to life. Why die yourself, on account of that? I can save you."

"No," McClellan said.

"Then sit here!" Bastian shouted. "Before you die there'll come a time when you'll be damned glad to shed these bracelets and take a chance on me. You're just as scared to die as I am—or you will be."

"You might be right," murmured McClellan. "And that would be a bad thing. Maybe I ought to give the Almighty a hand and remove myself from temptation."

A thin metal object appeared on the tip of McClellan's swollen tongue. His head tipped forward, and he spat the metal piece down into the narrow rock crevice.

Not until it was gone did Bastian realize that it was the key. Cursing, he sprawled face down and ran his long arm into the crevice, but he could not reach the bottom. Now at last he was spent and beaten. He beat on his knees with his fists.

McClellan said, "That won't buy you anything, Sam. You said you could carry me to water. These handcuffs won't interfere with that."

"I couldn't do it," Bastian said. "I lied to you. You should have known that. You should never have thrown away the key."

"I knew you were lying, Sam," McClellan said.

Bastian glared at the little man, searching for the difference between them and trying to work it out. In the end, he hung

his head; and they both sat there, side by side, dying slowly.

After a long time, Bastian pawed at McClellan and then whimpered, "You know about God. You believe. Ask him to do something."

McClellan had a hard time talking with his dry, thick tongue and bruised mouth. Slowly, he said, "You got this praying business all mixed up, Sam. I'll bet when Evans knew you were going to kill him, he prayed for you and not for himself."

Bastian said, "Yeah."

"That's the way it goes," muttered McClellan. "When a man prays for himself, he only asks for strength to do what he knows has to be done. When he asks for a gift, he only asks it for some other man, knowing that if his prayer is answered, there'll be some left over for him, besides the good feeling inside of him."

"You're crazy!" howled Bastian. "You're crazier than Tom Evans."

McClellan shrugged and fell silent, and Bastian hung his head again. But in a moment he looked up and bawled, "God! Do something! If you can't do it for me, do something for McClellan, here."

After a while it began to rain.

The thunderheads opened up and water fell in torrents. Once dry barrancas roared bankful for a few hours and ponds formed in the depressions. The deluge cleansed the air of dust and, when the clouds parted to let the sun shine through, that landmark in the south, that high, blue peak, stood out sharp and clear.

The tracks made by McClellan and Bastian on the damp sand led straight towards it, the prints of McClellan's boot a little ahead of those made by the other man.

* * *

THIRD DEGREE

In Budapest recently the Commissioner of Police ordered a detective to confirm whether a skeleton standing in the office was really that of Attila, the King of the Huns.

Some days later the detective returned with all that was left of the skeleton—a few splinters of bone.

"The skeleton was really that of Attila," he reported.

"How did you confirm it?" asked the commissioner.

"He confessed," the detective answered.

From "*Newsweek*"

AMORISTE

Let the sky hail kissing comfits, and snow eringoes; let a tempest of provocation come!

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that smiles today,
Tomorrow will be dying.

That age is best, which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time;
And while you may, go marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.

ROBERT HERRICK, 1591-1674

Devine Lover

Therefore the woman, to please her good lover, beside the graunting him mery countenances, familiar and secret talke, jeasting and dalying, hand in hand, may also lawfully, and without blame come to kissing: which in sensual love according to the Lord Julian's rules, is not lawfull. For since a kiss is a knitting together both of bodie and soule, it is to bee feared, lest the sensual lover be more enclined to the part of the bodie, than of the soule: but the reasonable lover woteth well, that although the mouth be a parcell of the bodie, yet is it an issue for the wordes, that be the interpreters of the soule.

And therefore hath the delite to joyne his mouth with the woman's beloved with a kisse: not to stir him to any dishonest desire, but drawne with a coveting one for the other, they pour them selves by turne the one into the other bodie, and bee so mingled together, that each of them hath two soules.

For this doe all chaste lovers covet a kisse, as a coupling of soules together. And therefore Plato the devine lover saith, that in kissing, his soule came as far as his lippes to depart out of his bodie.

COUNT BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE, 1478-1529,
Book of the Courtier

Venust

Now I am all
One bowl of kisses,
Such as the tall
Slim votaresses
Of Egypt filled
For divine excesses.

I lift to you
My bowl of kisses,
And through the temple's
Blue recesses
Cry out to you
In wild excesses

As to my lips'
Bright crimson rim
The passion slips ;
And down my slim
White body drips
The moving hymn.

And still before
The altar, I
Exalt the bowl
Brimful, and cry
To you to stoop
And drink, Most High.

D. H. LAWRENCE, 1885-1930

Sir ! she said

Stood by a pretty maid whom I did labour to take by the hand ; but she would not but got further and further from me ; and at last I could perceive her to take pins out of her pocket to prick me if I should touch her again, which seeing I did forbear and was glad I did spy her design. And then I fell to doze on another pretty maid in a pew close to me and she on me ; and I did go about to take her by the hand which she suffered a little then with drew. So the sermon ended and church broke up and my amours ended also.

SAMUEL PEPYS, 1633-1703, *Diary*

Coquette

Sometimes Esmond would think there was hope. Then again he would be plagued with despair, at some impertinence or coquetry of his mistress. For days they would be like brother and sister, or the dearest friends—she, simple, fond, and charming—he, happy beyond measure at her good behaviour. But this would all vanish on a sudden. Either he would be too pressing, and hint his love, when she would rebuff him instantly, and give his vanity a box on the ear; or he would be jealous, and with perfect good reason, of some new admirer that had sprung up, or some rich young gentleman newly arrived in the town, that this incorrigible flirt would set her nets and baits to draw in.

If Esmond remonstrated, the little rebel would say, "Who are you? I shall go my own way, sirrah, and that way is towards a husband, and I don't want *you* on the way. I am for your betters, Colonel, for your betters: do you hear that? You might do if you had an estate and were younger: only eight years older than I, you say! pish, you are a hundred years older. You are an old Graveairs, and I should make you miserable; that would be the only comfort I would have in marrying you. But you have not money enough to keep a cat decently after you have paid your man his wages, and your landlady her bill. Do you think I am going to live in a lodging, and turn the mutton at a string whilst your honour nurses the baby? Fiddlestick!"

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY, 1811-1863,
The History of Henry Esmond

Second Thoughts

So, we'll go no more a-roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a-roving
By the light of the moon.

LORD BYRON, 1788-1824

★*"I wants to make your flesh creep," says the Fat Boy of Pickwick Papers, and Dickens' ghosts need no introduction from us. They are our own familiars. But a Stranger has crept in amongst them, a Thirteenth Man, "to be taken," the author advises, "with a grain of salt." Over the left shoulder, perhaps?*

THE THIRTEENTH MAN

by CHARLES DICKENS

I HAVE always noticed a prevalent want of courage, even among persons of superior intelligence and culture, as to imparting their own psychological experiences when those have been of a strange sort. Almost all men are afraid that what they could relate in such wise would find no parallel in a listener's experience, and might be suspected or laughed at.

A truthful traveller who should have seen some extraordinary creature in the likeness of a sea-serpent, would have no fear of mentioning it; but the same traveller having had some singular presentiment, dream, or other remarkable mental impression, would hesitate considerably before he would own to it.

In what I am going to relate I have no intention of setting up, opposing, or supporting, any theory whatever. It cannot be referred to my inheritance of any developed peculiarity, nor had I ever before any similar experience, or such an experience since.

It does not signify how many years ago, or how few, a certain Murder was committed in England, which attracted great attention. We hear more than enough of Murderers as they rise in succession to their atrocious eminence, and I would bury the memory of this particular brute, if I could, as his body was buried, in Newgate Jail. I purposely abstain from giving any direct clue to the criminal's identity.

When the murder was first discovered, no suspicion fell—or I ought rather to say, for I cannot be too precise in my facts, it was nowhere publicly hinted that any suspicion fell—on the man who was afterwards brought to trial.

As no reference was at that time made to him in the newspapers, it is obviously impossible that any description of him can at that time have been given in the newspapers. It is essential that this fact be remembered.

Unfolding at breakfast my morning paper, containing the account of that first discovery, I found it to be deeply interesting, and I read it with close attention. I read it twice, if not three times. The discovery had been made in a bedroom, and, when I laid down the paper, I was aware of a flash—rush—flow—I do not know what to call it—no word I can find is satisfactorily descriptive—in which I seemed to see that bedroom passing through my room, like a picture impossibly painted on a running river. Though almost instantaneous in its passing, it was perfectly clear; so clear that I distinctly, and with a sense of relief, observed the absence of the dead body from the bed.

It was in no romantic place that I had this curious sensation, but in chambers in Piccadilly, very near to the corner of Saint James's Street.

It was entirely new to me. I was in my easy-chair at the moment, and the sensation was accompanied with a peculiar shiver which started the chair from its position. (But it is to be noted that the chair ran easily on castors.) I went to one of the windows (there are two in the room, and the room is on the second floor) to refresh my eyes with the moving objects down in Piccadilly.

It was a bright autumn morning, and the street was sparkling and cheerful. The wind was high. As I looked out, it brought down from the Park a quantity of fallen leaves, which a gust took, and whirled into a spiral pillar. As the pillar fell and the leaves dispersed, I saw two men on the opposite side of the way, going from West to East. They were one behind the other. The foremost man often looked back over his shoulder. The second man followed him, at a distance of some thirty paces, with his right hand menacingly raised.

First, the singularity and steadiness of this threatening gesture in so public a thoroughfare, attracted my attention; and next, the more remarkable circumstance that nobody heeded it. Both men threaded their way among the other passengers, with a smoothness hardly consistent even with the action of walking on a pavement, and no single creature that I could see, gave them place, touched them, or looked after them. In passing before my windows, they both stared up at me. I saw their two faces very distinctly, and I knew that I could recognize them anywhere. Not that I had consciously noticed anything very remarkable in either face, except that the man who went first had an unusually louring appearance, and that the face of the man who followed him was of the colour of impure wax.

I am a bachelor, and my valet and his wife constitute my whole establishment. My occupation is in a certain Branch Bank, and I wish that my duties as head of a Department were as light as they

are popularly supposed to be. They kept me in town that autumn, when I stood in need of a change. I was not ill, but I was not well. My reader is to make the most that can be reasonably made of my feeling jaded, having a depressing sense upon me of a monotonous life, and being "slightly dyspeptic." I am assured by my renowned doctor that my real state of health at that time justifies no stronger description, and I quote his own from his written answer to my request for it.

As the circumstances of the Murder, gradually unravelling, took stronger and stronger possession of the public mind, I kept them away from mine, by knowing as little about them as was possible in the midst of the universal excitement. But I knew that a charge of Wilful Murder had been made against the suspected Murderer, and that he had been committed to Newgate for trial. I also knew that his trial had been postponed over one Sessions of the Central Criminal Court, on the ground of general prejudice and want of time for the preparation of the defence.

I may further have known, but I believe I did not, when, or about when, the Sessions to which his trial stood postponed would come on.

My sitting-room, bedroom, and dressing-room, are all on one floor. With the last, there is no communication but through the bedroom. True, there is a door in it, once communicating with the staircase; but a part of the fitting of my bath has been—and had then been for some years—fixed across it. At the same period, and as a part of the same arrangement, the door had been nailed up and canvased over.

I was standing in my bedroom late one night, giving some directions to my servant before he went to bed. My face was towards the only available door of communication with the dressing-room, and it was closed. My servant's back was towards that door. While I was speaking to him I saw it open, and a man look in, who very earnestly and mysteriously beckoned to me. That man was the man who had gone second of the two along Piccadilly, and whose face was of the colour of impure wax.

The figure, having beckoned, drew back and closed the door. With no longer pause than was made by my crossing the bedroom, I opened the dressing-room door, and looked in. I had a lighted candle already in my hand. I felt no inward expectation of seeing the figure in the dressing-room, and I did not see it there.

Conscious that my servant stood amazed, I turned round to him, and said: "Derrick, could you believe that in my cool senses I fancied I saw a—"

As I there laid my hands upon his breast, with a sudden start

he trembled violently, and said, "O Lord yes sir! A dead man beckoning!"

Now, I do not believe that this John Derrick, my trusty and attached servant for more than twenty years, had any impression whatever of having seen any such figure, until I touched him. The change in him was so startling when I touched him, that I fully believe he derived his impression in some occult manner from me at that instant.

I bade John Derrick bring some brandy, and I gave him a dram, and was glad to take one myself. Of what had preceded that night's phenomenon, I told not a single word. Reflecting on it, I was absolutely certain that I had never seen that face before, except on the one occasion in Piccadilly. Comparing its expression when beckoning at the door, with its expression when it had stared up at me as I stood at my window, I came to the conclusion that on the first occasion it had sought to fasten itself upon my memory, and that on the second occasion it had made sure of being immediately remembered.

I was not very comfortable that night, though I felt a certainty, difficult to explain, that the figure would not return. At daylight, I fell into a heavy sleep, from which I was awakened by John Derrick's coming to my bedside with a paper in his hand.

This paper, it appeared, had been the subject of an altercation at the door between its bearer and my servant. It was a summons to me to serve upon a Jury at the forthcoming Sessions of the Central Criminal Court at the Old Bailey. I had never before been summoned on such a Jury, as John Derrick well knew. He believed—I am not certain at this hour whether with reason or otherwise—that that class of Jurors were customarily chosen on a lower qualification than mine, and he had at first refused to accept the summons. The man who served it had taken the matter very coolly. He had said that my attendance or non-attendance was nothing to him; there the summons was; and I should deal with it at my own peril, and not at his.

For a day or two I was undecided whether to respond to this call, or take no notice of it. I was not conscious of the slightest mysterious bias, influence, or attraction, one way or other. Of that I am as strictly sure as of every other statement that I make here. Ultimately I decided, as a break in the monotony of my life, that I would go.

The appointed morning was a raw morning in the month of November. There was a dense brown fog in Piccadilly, and it became positively black and in the last degree oppressive east of Temple Bar. I found the passages and staircases of the Court

House flaringly lighted with gas, and the Court itself similarly illuminated.

I *think* that until I was conducted by officers into the Old Court and saw its crowded state, I did not know that the Murderer was to be tried that day. I *think* that until I was so helped into the Old Court with considerable difficulty, I did not know into which of the two Courts sitting, my summons would take me. But this must not be received as a positive assertion, for I am not completely satisfied in my mind on either point.

I took my seat in the place appropriated to Jurors in waiting, and I looked about the Court as well as I could through the cloud of fog and breath that was heavy in it. I noticed the black vapour hanging like a murky curtain outside the great windows, and I noticed the stifled sound of wheels on the straw or tan that was littered in the street; also, the hum of the people gathered there, which a shrill whistle, or a louder song or hail than the rest, occasionally pierced. Soon afterwards the Judges, two in number, entered and took their seats.

The buzz in the Court was awfully hushed. The direction was given to bring the Murderer in to the dock. He appeared there. And in that same instant I recognized in him the first of the two men who had gone down Piccadilly.

If my name had been called then, I doubt if I could have answered to it audibly. But it was called about sixth or eighth in the panel, and I was by that time able to say "Here!" Now, observe. As I stepped into the box, the prisoner, who had been looking on attentively but with no sign of concern, became violently agitated, and beckoned to his attorney. The prisoner's wish to challenge me was so manifest, that it occasioned a pause, during which the attorney, with his hand upon the dock, whispered with his client, and shook his head.

I afterwards had it from that gentleman, that the prisoner's first affrighted words to him were, "*At all hazards challenge that man!*" But, that as he would give no reason for it, and admitted that he had not even known my name until he heard it called and I appeared, it was not done.

Both on the ground already explained, that I wish to avoid reviving the unwholesome memory of that Murderer, and also because a detailed account of his long trial is by no means indispensable to my narrative, I shall confine myself closely to such incidents in the ten days and nights during which we, the Jury, were kept together, as directly bear on my own curious personal experience.

It is in that, and not in the Murderer, that I seek to interest my reader.

I was chosen Foreman of the Jury. On the second morning of the trial, after evidence had been taken for two hours (I heard the church clocks strike), happening to cast my eyes over my brother-jurymen, I found an inexplicable difficulty in counting them. I counted them several times, yet always with the same difficulty. In short, I made them one too many.

I touched the brother-juryman whose place was next to me, and I whispered to him, "Oblige me by counting us." He looked surprised by the request, but turned his head and counted. "Why," says he, suddenly, "we are Thirt—; but no, it's not possible. No. We are twelve."

According to my counting that day, we were always right in detail, but in the gross we were always one too many. There was no appearance—no figure—to account for it; but I had now an inward foreshadowing of the figure that was surely coming.

The jury were housed at the London Tavern. We all slept in one large room; and we were constantly in the charge and under the eye of the officer sworn to hold us in safe-keeping. I see no reason for suppressing the real name of that officer. He was intelligent, highly polite, and obliging, and (I was glad to hear) much respected in the City. He had an agreeable presence, good eyes, enviable black whiskers, and a fine sonorous voice. His name was Mr. Harker.

When we turned into our twelve beds at night, Mr. Harker's bed was drawn across the door. On the night of the second day, not being disposed to lie down, and seeing Mr. Harker sitting on his bed, I went and sat beside him, and offered him a pinch of snuff. As Mr. Harker's hand touched mine in taking it from my box, a peculiar shiver crossed him, and he said: "Who is this!"

Following Mr. Harker's eyes and looking along the room, I saw again the figure I expected—the second of the two men who had gone down Piccadilly. I rose, and advanced a few steps; then stopped, and looked round at Mr. Harker. He was quite unconcerned, laughed, and said in a pleasant way, "I thought for a moment we had a thirteenth juryman, without a bed. But I see it is the moonlight."

Making no revelation to Mr. Harker, but inviting him to take a walk with me to the end of the room, I watched what the figure did. It stood for a few moments by the bedside of each of my eleven brother-jurymen, close to the pillow. It always went to the right-hand side of the bed, and always passed out crossing the foot of the next bed.

It seemed from the action of the head, merely to look down pensively at each recumbent figure. It took no notice of me, or

of my bed, which was that nearest to Mr. Harker's. It seemed to go out where the moonlight came in, through a high window, as by an aerial flight of stairs.

Next morning at breakfast, it appeared that everybody present had dreamed of the murdered man last night, except myself and Mr. Harker.

I now felt as convinced that the second man who had gone down Piccadilly was the murdered man as if it had been borne into my comprehension by his immediate testimony. But even this took place, and in a manner for which I was not at all prepared.

On the fifth day of the trial, when the case for the prosecution was drawing to a close, a miniature of the murdered man, missing from his bedroom upon the discovery of the deed, and afterwards found in a hiding-place where the Murderer had been seen digging, was put in evidence. Having been identified by the witness under examination, it was handed up to the Bench, and thence handed down to be inspected by the Jury.

As an officer in a black gown was making his way with it across to me, the figure of the second man who had gone down Piccadilly, impetuously started from the crowd, caught the miniature from the officer, and gave it to me with its own hands, at the same time saying in a low and hollow tone—before I saw the miniature, which was in a locket—"*I was younger then, and my face was not then drained of blood.*" It also came between me and the brother-juryman to whom I would have given the miniature, and between him and the brother-juryman to whom he would have given it, and so passed it on through the whole of our number, and back into my possession. Not one of them, however, detected this.

At table, and generally when we were shut up together in Mr. Harker's custody, we had from the first naturally discussed the day's proceedings a good deal. On that fifth day, the case for the prosecution being closed, and we having that side of the question in a completed shape before us, our discussion was more animated and serious.

Among our number was a vestryman—the densest idiot I have ever seen at large—who met the plainest evidence with the most preposterous objections, and who was sided with by two flabby parochial parasites; all the three empanelled from a district so delivered over to Fever that they ought to have been upon their own trial, for five hundred Murders. When these mischievous block-heads were at their loudest, which was towards midnight while some of us were already preparing for bed, I again saw the murdered man.

He stood grimly behind them, beckoning to me. On my going towards them and striking into the conversation, he immediately retired.

This was the beginning of a separate series of appearances, confined to that long room in which *we* were confined. Whenever a knot of my brother jurymen laid their heads together, I saw the head of the murdered man among theirs. Whenever their comparison of notes was going against him, he would solemnly and irresistibly beckon to me.

It will be borne in mind that down to the production of the miniature on the fifth day of the trial, I had never seen the Appearance in Court. Three changes occurred, now that we entered on the case for the defence. Two of them I will mention together, first. The figure was now in Court continually, though it never there addressed itself to me, but always to the person who was speaking at the time.

For instance. The throat of the murdered man had been cut straight across. In the opening speech for the defence, it was suggested that the deceased might have cut his own throat. At that very moment, the figure with its throat in the dreadful condition referred to (this it had concealed before) stood at the speaker's elbow, motioning across and across its windpipe, now with the right hand, now with the left, vigorously suggesting to the speaker himself, the impossibility of such a wound having been self-inflicted by either hand.

For another instance. A witness to character, a woman, testified to the prisoner's being the most amiable of men. The figure at that instant stood on the floor before her, looking her full in the face, and pointing out the prisoner's evil countenance with an extended arm and an outstretched finger.

The third change now to be added, impressed me strongly, as the most marked and striking of all. I do not theorise upon it; I accurately state it, and there leave it. Although the Appearance was not itself perceived by those whom it addressed, its coming close to such persons was invariably attended by some trepidation or disturbance on their part. It seemed to me as if it were prevented by laws to which I was not amenable, from fully revealing itself to others, and yet as if it could, invisibly, dumbly and darkly, overshadow their minds.

When the leading counsel for the defence suggested that hypothesis of suicide and the figure stood at the learned gentleman's elbow, frightfully sawing at its severed throat, it is undeniable that the counsel faltered in his speech, lost for a few seconds the thread of his ingenious discourse, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and turned extremely pale. When the witness to character was confronted by the Appearance, her eyes most certainly did follow the direction of its pointed finger, and rest in great hesitation and trouble upon the prisoner's face.

Two additional illustrations will suffice. On the eighth day of the trial, after the pause which was every day made early in the afternoon for a few minutes' rest and refreshment, I came back into Court with the rest of the Jury, some little time before the return of the Judges.

Standing up in the box and looking about me, I thought the figure was not there, until, chancing to raise my eyes to the gallery, I saw it bending forward and leaning over a woman there, as if to assure itself whether the Judges had resumed their seats or not. Immediately afterwards, that woman screamed, fainted, and was carried out.

So with the venerable, sagacious, and patient Judge who conducted the trial. When the case was over, and he settled himself and his papers to sum up, the murdered man entering by the Judge's door, advanced to his Lordship's desk, and looked eagerly over his shoulder at the pages of his notes which he was turning. A change came over his Lordship's face; his hand stopped; the peculiar shiver that I knew so well, passed over him; he faltered, "Excuse me gentlemen, for a few moments. I am somewhat oppressed by the vitiated air;" and did not recover until he had drunk a glass of water.

Through all the monotony of six of those interminable ten days —the same Judges and others on the bench, the same Murderer in the dock, the same lawyers at the table, the same tones of question and answer rising to the roof of the court, the same scratching of the Judge's pen, the same ushers going in and out; the same lights kindled at the same hour when there had been any natural light of day, the same foggy curtain outside the great windows when it was foggy, the same rain pattering and dripping when it was rainy, the same footmarks of turnkeys and prisoner day after day on the same sawdust, the same keys locking and unlocking the same heavy doors—through all the wearisome monotony which made me feel as if I had been Foreman of the Jury for a vast period of time, and Piccadilly had flourished coevally with Babylon, the murdered man never lost one trace of his distinctness in my eyes, nor was he at any moment less distinct than anybody else.

I must not omit, as a matter of fact, that I never once saw the Appearance which I call by the name of the murdered man, look at the Murderer. Again and again I wondered, "Why does he not?" But he never did.

Nor did he look at me, after the production of the miniature, until the last closing minutes of the trial arrived. We retired to consider, at seven minutes before ten at night. The idiotic vestryman and his two parochial parasites gave us so much trouble, that

we twice returned into Court, to beg to have certain extracts from the Judge's notes re-read. Nine of us had not the smallest doubt about those passages, neither, I believe, had any one in Court; the dunder-headed triumvirate however, having no idea but obstruction, disputed them for that very reason. At length we prevailed, and finally the Jury returned into Court at ten minutes past twelve.

The murdered man at that time stood directly opposite the Jury-box, on the other side of the Court. As I took my place, his eyes rested on me, with great attention; he seemed satisfied, and slowly shook a great grey veil, which he carried on his arm for the first time, over his head and whole form.

As I gave in our verdict "Guilty," the veil collapsed, all was gone, and his place was empty!

The murderer being asked by the Judge, according to usage, whether he had anything to say before sentence of Death should be passed upon him, indistinctly muttered something which was described in the leading newspapers of the following day as "a few rambling, incoherent, and half-audible words, in which he was understood to complain that he had not had a fair trial, because the Foreman of the Jury was prepossessed against him."

The remarkable declaration that he really made, was this:

"My Lord, I knew I was a doomed man when the Foreman of my Jury came into the box. My Lord, I knew he would never let me off, because, before I was taken, he somehow got to my bedside in the night, woke me, and put a rope round my neck."

* * *

WATERLOO

At the same naval base during the war were stationed John Moore, author of "Portrait of Elmbury" and "Brensham Village," and the well-known actors Sir Ralph Richardson and Sir Laurence Olivier.

The station's Commanding Officer regarded all of them with deep misgiving, so much so indeed that one day he was heard to observe to a subordinate, "In the words of Wellington, I do not know what effect these men may have on the enemy, but by God, they frighten me!"

BROWN OWL

Joey is a warning, and his eyes are judgment itself

by H. M. TOMLINSON

ONE night, the night of my arrival home after a long absence, I was introduced to Joey. It was the first time I had ever looked straight at a large owl, desiring friendship, but wondering whether or not I was going to get it.

That owl, sitting on the table, was not a bird. I should call it a gnome. The other members of the family sat round, and laughed. They knew the creature. Evidently he was on intimate terms with them, though there was no laughter in his direct and impish stare at me. His flat face, with its enlarged and challenging eyes, was odd. He stared at me briefly, then turned his head away wearily, as if he had seen all he wanted. I was dismissed.

He began larking with those he knew. He walked about with a jaunty and rolling gait, like a sailor who knows what he is expected to do to make people happy. He made them happy. His conduct, in a guise of the utmost gravity, was ridiculous. When presently I tried to join the party, he gave me another stare, and its meaning was plain: "You still here?" Without warning he flew at me, his grappling hooks in front of him. I drew back, to more laughter; for it appeared that this was his fun.

Joey's plumage is beautiful, though at first you might not notice it. The beauty of a shadow, with its tones, needs more than a careless glance. This soft swarthiness has regular markings of hazel and buff. When he sits within a greater shadow, his eyes may blaze like orange glow-lamps. Now that he and I know each other, he will sit on the back of a chair near me, when I am writing. He shakes his feathers loose, half closes his eyes, and at times makes a contented noise, if spoken to. Or he will come to my shoulder to sit there, occasionally nibbling round my ear with his sickle-like beak. But there is no need to worry about that. He knows what his beak can do, but he is a perfect gentleman. His claws can close like a vice, but not on us.

It is certain that a bird cannot be a Christian, but the simple truth is that Joey is more like the real thing than most of us try to be. If you offend his dignity, certainly he resents it, but he never

retaliates, and he never harbours resentment. He is magnanimous without knowing what that means.

In fact, I think I would sooner write about that owl than about anything else that I may happen to understand in a small measure. He fascinates me because, beyond Freud or Jung, he appears to hint that life is a riddle which we had better give up. No good even dreaming about it. Besides, like the Sphinx, he gives no help, but merely sits looking to futurity with those awful eyes of his.

Since our first meeting, I have enjoyed the good fortune of a close friendship with Joey, who is just a Wood, or English Brown Owl. I do not propose to tell any tall stories about him, nor to pursue, biologically, the problems of memory, joy, love, sorrow, fear, and so on, to their remote physiological springs in a bird, for I am ignorant of the way. I could not put that owl's mind, should it exist, under the microscope. But at least he has caused me to put my own there for a brief examination, with what result I need not confess.

Joey is a warning. My assurance fails me under that inscrutable contemplation of his; which is beautiful to see, though there is an element of terror in it, if you dare his glance long enough. It occurs to me, while observing him, that there may be a ridiculous side to our science, when we are explaining what we know of these lower creatures.

As for Joey, we have examined diligently all the evidence about the Brown Owl in the ornithological text books; but I must say that, except for his coloration, and his language—or some of it—and his weight and dimensions, he is still outside those books. He sits above and beyond, beautifully meditative, quietly interested in our strange behaviour, not altogether unwilling to assist us in the careful measuring of his primaries—for we grow more and more concerned with the need to establish beyond doubt his ordinary owlship; but he is outside. He is beyond us.

We at home have seen in him the reason why the ancients chose him as the symbol of learning and wisdom. The reason is obvious enough. It is not because his eyes are deep with shadows, and are better to look at than most eyes; they certainly give, in repose, a hint of mild but unusual wisdom. But they seem to tell him, without fail, all he wants to know about anything which takes his interest, and his interest is constant and alert.

He has an inspection which begins with an instant and piercing glance, while his body is motionless, and thus he may remain for a full minute, meditating whatever it may be, with a stern fixity which would draw out the innermost secret of a diplomatic note. Satisfied at last that it is worthless, he turns away his head with an

expression of tedium, and the object is thus contemptuously dismissed.

But that first challenging glance, that night stare of his, though I am used to it, and know that Joey is incapable of treachery, is still somewhat startling when he fixes it on me. You feel like a sinner whose very thoughts are manifest. He sees through you; and thereupon he relaxes, puffs his feathers, and languidly half closes with bluish veils those dark and luminous orbs. But let anything stir in the shadows—I think he can hear a shadow move—and he becomes as tense as a taut spring, and his eyes are judgment itself.

When he sees a matter quite novel to him, he has a curious habit of moving his face in a circle; and if the object really astonishes him, as when he saw his first aeroplane, then his whole body sways to enlarge the radius of the circle. It is a comic spectacle of eager curiosity, altogether different from his still glance of doom when a mouse is present, though unperceived by our crude senses.

I used to think that rotary performance of his head was a foolishness of his till once I caught myself shifting my head about to give a name to something nondescript on the floor which glinted in the lamplight. So now I know that when Joey plays that caper he is but obtaining evidence of an object from different angles; he is trying to give it solidity.

That he reasons things out there can be no doubt. I should rate his intelligence as high as that of a good cat, and his manners and morality much higher. He has a sense of fun. He is very good-natured. Even when badly irritated he never strikes with his full force, but appears to remember in his extreme annoyance just how far his sickle beak may be struck into a hand without drawing blood. Yet it can execute a rat with a single swift puncture through the skull between the ears. The rat has no chance at all.

Joey looks very satisfied with himself when he has nailed so big a victim, and evidently expects that we will admire him. He lifts his flat, intelligent face to us with a new expression of languid and fatuous good humour; but one foot has the rat's middle in a vice of steel; it would be useless for the unlucky creature to struggle, and it does not. But Joey, I must say, shows no cruel enjoyment, as would a cat, in fooling with his prey. He stoops down and very soon despatches it.

He has never yet shown anger, but only a kind of fierce resentment, which he expresses with a sound which mixes a whistle and a warble, in a high key, his wings outspread and his head held low. And he will do what most cats will not. If he is out after dark, and you call quietly his name into the night, then presently a

great noiseless shadow sweeps swiftly at you; and you may be used to him, but control is necessary or you will dodge; and so he alights on your shoulder, nibbles your ear in salutation, and questions you in friendly undertones.

It is amusing to watch a strange cat in its prowl come upon Joey where he is hunched in deep thought on the garden border. The cat sees at once that this is a bird. So near, too. A bird? What a bird! The cat's mingling of desire and fear is plain in its attitude. It would attack, but dare not. Joey does not move, but looks at the trespasser as a constable would at a loafer. The cat slinks off, Joey's haughty glance following it.

One curious trick he has which, so far as I know, the natural history books do not record; perhaps because, in the wild, the trick is invariably successful. It is not always easy, by daylight, to pick him out of the shadows of a tree, even when you know he is somewhere there. But if a noisy stranger comes into the garden, that owl instantly understudies a dead stump. He elongates stiffly and shuts his eyes; he might be aware that it is his eyes you see first, when looking for him. When he has become a stump of dead wood, then he is nothing but that. You may even push him, but he does not relax, nor open his eyes. He is a stump. There is no owl.

He is fond of a bit of fun, but only after dark. Like a cat, he will pounce on small moving objects. Suppose that you secrete a matchbox, tied to a length of string, under the tablecloth, Joey will spy its first effort to get slyly away. However, he looks elsewhere. He pretends that he has been unobservant. He looks everywhere but at the suspicious movement. Then, with his odd walk, that curious rolling gait, like that of a stout and light-hearted seaman, he strides not directly towards the movement, but only obliquely, as though he had just thought of something more important than play. Yet as soon as he is beside the object, he is on it so quickly with his talons that there is no getting used to his suddenness. We used to play this game by moving our hands under the tablecloth. Now we prefer a matchbox and string.

There was a time when we thought he had had enough of us, and was about to choose a home in alien trees. But he remains, and he seems to have lost his desire for the wild. He keeps close to the household. He seems to prefer to stay within sight of the place he knows; for he is a sociable creature, and at times comes to the window to intimate that he wishes to sit, for a spell, within the family circle. When admitted he becomes maudlin with his demonstrations of affection, though never servile, like a dog. He stands no nonsense even when most maudlin.

It should be added that he was found, two years ago, an orphaned fledgling. He would have died of starvation but that a boy of the house, who had a way of his own with animals, got a blow-pipe, filled his mouth with milk, and blew it into Joey. The dodge worked. Joey has never forgotten, by the look of it, the one who gave that first kindly attention with a blow-pipe. For the boy has gone overseas, and now Joey sits humped and not at all playful, contemplative, friendly, but by no means inclined to accept me as a substitute for his companion.

His particular friend used to be the first to greet him in the morning. Joey came eagerly to the opening of the door. He comes eagerly now, but it is odd to see his sudden relapse into indifference, when the familiar sound of that opening door is no longer followed by a sight of the one he most favoured.

There was a memorable occasion when we were visited by Thomas Hardy. I believe that great man had a special regard for owls; the author of *The Dynasts*, we may fairly suppose, would know why the owl is Athene's familiar. In any case, the venerable poet and Joey unexpectedly confronted each other. It was a strange experience for the rest of us, who stood and watched them. They did not speak; they regarded each other intently, but I do not know what passed between them. Presently the poet turned sadly away; and the owl directed his gaze elsewhere as though entirely satisfied.

I had written all that, and I think I had an intention to continue it, perhaps as an attempt at a purely ornithological study. But a day came when Joey's young friend returned from overseas. Joey looked at him, and understood, but did not move. He was not demonstrative, but he began to watch for the coming and going of his old friend. He regained his humorous spirit. Then, with surprising suddenness, he deprived me of my one chance to contribute to ornithology.

We stood round him one morning while he stared at us from the ground; he was on his back, and that had never happened before. He stared at us with what appeared to be bright and haughty knowledge. His young friend, so recently returned, knelt to lift his head. The brown owl nibbled his fingers in greeting. Then he shut his eyes and returned to Athene.

* * *

JUNO

A wise woman will always let her husband have her way.

R. B. SHERIDAN

TABLE D'HÔTE

I am not hungry ; but thank goodness,
I am greedy

From Punch, 1878

"I know what you are thinking of, John," said Mr. Freeman in a serious tone. "You are thinking if anything were to happen to either of us in this heathen land, where we should get Christian burial."

"Lord love you, Mr. Freeman, no I wasn't; I was thinking of a glass of ale."

LORD BEACONSFIELD, 1804-1881, *Tancred*

Rum and Milk

Now some may drink old vintage wine
To ladies gowned with rustling silk,
But we will drink to dairymaids,
And drink to them in rum and milk—
O, it's up in the morning early,
When the dew is on the grass,
And St. John's bell rings for matins,
And St. Mary's rings for mass ! . . .

The mushrooms may be priceless pearls
A queen has lost beside the stream ;
But rum is melted rubies when
It turns the milk to golden cream !
O, it's up in the morning early,
When the dew is on the grass,
And St. John's bell rings for matins,
And St. Mary's rings for mass !

CHARLES DALMON

Roast Pork

Listen to me ye Romani lads, who are seated in the straw about the fire, and I will tell how we poison the porker, I will tell how we poison the porker.

We go to the house of the poison-monger, where we buy three pennies' worth of bane, and when we return to our people we say, we will poison the porker ; we will try and poison the porker.

We then make up the poison, and then we take our way to the house of the farmer, as if to beg a bit of victuals, a little broken victuals.

We see a jolly porker, and then we say in Romani language, "Fling the bane yonder amongst the dirt, and the porker soon will find it, the porker soon will find it."

Early on the morrow, we will return to the farm-house, and beg the dead porker, the body of the dead porker.

And so we do, even so we do; the porker dieth during the night; on the morrow we beg the porker, and carry to the tent the porker.

And then we wash the inside well, till all the inside is perfectly clean, till there's no bane within it, not a poison grain within it.

And then we roast the body well, send for ale to the ale-house, and have a merry banquet, a merry Romani banquet.

The fellow with the fiddle plays, he plays; the little lassie sings, she sings an ancient Romani ditty; now hear the Romani ditty . . .

GEORGE BORROW, 1803-1881, *The Romany Rye*

The Next Best

Wine, madam, is God's next best gift to man.

AMBROSE BIERCE, *The Devil's Dictionary*

—And the Humble Feast

Now for a more humble Feast, or an ordinary proportion which any good man may keep in his family . . .

It is good then for him that intends to Feast to set down the full number of his full dishes, that is, dishes of meat that are of substance, and not empty, or for shew; and of these sixteen is a good proportion for one course unto one messe, as thus, for example:

First, a shield of Brawn with mustard, Secondly, a boyl'd Capon, Thirdly, a boyl'd piece of Beef, Fourthly, a chine of Beef rosted, Fifthly, a Neat's tongue rosted, Sixthly, a Pig rosted, Seventhly, Chewets bak'd, Eighthly, a Goose rosted, Ninthly, a Swan rosted, Tenthly, a Turkey rosted, the Eleventh, a Haunch of Venison rosted, the Twelfth, a Pasty of Venison, the Thirteenth, a Kid with a pudding in the belly, the Fourteenth, an Olive-pye, the Fifteenth, a couple of Capons, the Sixteenth, a Custard or Dousets.

Now to these full dishes may be added . . .

GERVASE MARKHAM, 1568-1637

Christening Feast

As we have greater plenty & variety at some time of the year than at other times the poor Infant is kept, if it should happen to Dye, from being intituled to the kingdom of heaven by Baptism untill the good time comes and the hog is fat . . .

And then we have Corne Shote & Bonivess, a Calipie of Sea Tortoise, a Stude Cofum, and rosted Caberetta & other things baked and barbiqued, with planting, tarts and yam puddings. For fruits wonderfull variety as Chegeis grapes, fat porks, sower sopps and the guavas. Then for liquors we have at these merry times strong Cowjou, sparkling mobby. Humming Pareno, and to crown the feast a lusty bowl of Rum punch (alias kill devil).

THOMAS WALDUCK, *in a letter to James Petiver from Barbados*, 1710

Cat and Mouse

There was a wee bit mousikie,
That lived in Gilberaty, O,
It couldna get a bite o' cheese,
For cheetie-poussie-cattie, O.

It said unto the cheesikie,
" Oh fain wad I be at ye, O,
If 't were na for the cruel paws
O' cheetie-poussie-cattie, O."

Old Scots Nursery Rhyme

The Queen, God be Thanked—

Even in the lusty days of Elizabeth's long reign, when England's blood ran, perhaps, at its fastest and finest, there were melancholy observers of what seemed signs of weakening in the nation's appetite . . .

And the ladies, lying in bed until six o'clock in the morning! When they arose, they breakfasted like babies, thinking they could start the day decently on a pot of ale and but one meagre pound of bacon.

The Queen, God be thanked, paid no attention to the new-style finicking, and made her first meal of the day light but sustaining: butter, bread (brown, to stay in the stomach longer and more wholesomely than white), a stew of mutton, a joint of beef, one of veal, some rabbits in a pie, chickens, and fruits, with . . . wine to wash all down in really hygienic fashion.

M. F. K. FISHER, *Serve It Forth*.

THE BRIDGE

Some men are brave, some aren't, and you learn to take them as they come

by ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

AROUND the Big Top, you learn to judge character—fast. And you can't keep any secrets so there's no use trying. But it needn't worry you, because when people really know human nature, they have a lot of respect for it. It's only the people who can see through a keyhole with both eyes who look down on the other fellow's faults.

Crawford knew Ashley was a coward before the outfit had been on the road two days, but he didn't hold it against him. Some men are brave, some aren't, and in this business you take them as they come.

The trouble was—Marged knew Ashley's weakness. Don't ask me how she spotted it, but she did. Marged ran a trained animal show, mostly dogs, and Ashley worked for her. The dogs liked him, but they sensed a weakness in the man's character. They wagged their tails at him, but it was Marged that they followed with their eyes.

You never know how gossip gets started, but word got around that Ashley had been a slack ropewalker and an aerial man who had worked his way through most of the States in his time. Then there'd been a spill, his partner had been killed, and Ashley hadn't gone back to the act. He'd started running away from things. It may have been true. You know how these things get twisted. Perhaps it was only half true. Anyhow, he always worked in a clown make-up, doing stunts with the dogs that made grownups laugh and kids howl with glee.

When we'd been on the road two months, Ashley bought a trailer and offered to share it with George Crawford. It was just a shoe box, but it was home to those two, and until you've been knocked from pillar to post you have no idea what it means to be housed in a trailer of your own.

We were making a move that Friday night, and no matter how long you've been with a show, there's always an air of tension around moving time, with all the dismantling and last minute

packing. You have only a matter of minutes to get ready for the road and meet at the rendezvous.

This Friday night it started to drizzle, and the crowd thinned out as if by magic. About nine o'clock we got the signal, and right after that we went to work trying to get things stored before they got wet and soggy. Then, all of a sudden, the heavens opened up and it came down in sheets and buckets. I've just never seen it rain like that.

Ashley didn't even take off his clown make-up. He helped Marged get things packed, and by that time George was ready to go. They drove out to the trailer park on the island and started getting things together. They really didn't have to be in such a hurry; there was lots of time, once they got the canvas stowed.

The trailer camp wasn't much, but it was cool and that was something. It was out there in the river, on an island with a rickety bridge running out to it.

We'd just got our trailers hitched and were ready to move when we heard the police sirens.

I suppose when you're a law-abiding citizen and a taxpayer in a community, you can hear a police siren without getting nervous. You have rights, and the police respect them. But when you're drifting through the country, if anything goes wrong the blame's always laid on those darned show people; and the next thing you know, you're being pushed around.

This time it was different. The police poured over the bridge and started banging on the trailer doors. One of them kept the siren going, and the red spotlights were playing around the windows of the trailers.

It seemed there were a couple of dams up above us. The lower one had broken. No one knew what was going to happen to the second one. We had maybe ten minutes, maybe not quite that long. The police had to clear the island—fast. Cars that were already hooked on to trailers could take the trailers across the bridge; otherwise, they'd have to move off and leave the trailers behind.

There was a lot of confusion. But our crowd was soon packed and ready, so we just got going and began to leave the site. We were rattling over the ramshackle bridge while the police were still pounding on doors and arguing with people who wanted to hook on to their trailers. It was a sweet mess.

The police cars had two-way radios, and we could hear the blast of voices over the loudspeakers, broadcasting in an expressionless monotone information that made a man's spine go cold.

Suddenly we heard that steady voice: "Calling all cars, calling all cars. Crest of wave, fifteen feet high, estimated five minutes from

city limits—five minutes from city limits—crest of wave fifteen feet high—retire to high ground immediately. That is all."

The bridge swayed drunkenly with the rush of traffic. Lots of the trailers were left behind. Two minutes after the broadcast, the island was officially cleared, and the police reported to headquarters over their radio.

The island was low, but the river had a high, firm bank. We sat there and watched. Through the lashing rain, it was possible to hear the roar of water long before we could see it. Then suddenly it came rushing at us out of the night, a vast surging torrent, heaving and writhing on itself in a frenzy of destruction.

The bridge raised up like a cat's back—then it buckled in the middle, turned to kindling wood, and disappeared.

The crest of the wave raced on, leaving behind it a flooded stream, roaring in sullen anger, racing down the river bed in a muddy torrent.

Bulletins were coming in over the police car radios: "Upper dam is filled to overflowing, spillways at greatest capacity, incapable of handling flood. If this dam goes out, there will be terrific loss of life. Move everyone back to higher ground—repeating, move everyone back to higher ground. Possibility of twenty-foot crest. Dam is still holding, but condition critical. That is all."

It was then that we heard the scream.

You could take one look at the couple and tell the sort of people they were. Slow-thinking, plodding people, dogged in their determination, protected by an ingrained suspicion of everything they couldn't understand, rather than by intelligence.

Police gathered around the window.

It wasn't much of a story. They had been unable to save the trailer. The woman had taken the kids and gone on across the bridge. The father had stayed behind until the last minute to save what he could, and then had come across in the car. The mother thought he had put the baby in the automobile; he thought the mother had the baby with her. The kid was evidently still over there, asleep in the trailer.

The spotlights on the police cars cut through the rain to the island. It wasn't far, something like two hundred feet at the most, but no swimmer on earth could have gone through that torrent, and a boat would have been as useless as a chip of wood.

A big cable had supported a water main and a gas conduit. Now, all that was left was the cable, which sagged drunkenly from the low branches of a tree, across to the central pier of the bridge—which was still standing—and then over to the island. Water from the broken water main was spurting out into the muddy torrent. The

gas line had been swept away, but the cable tangled in the tree branches seemed firm enough to bear a man's weight.

Marged moved over to Ashley. She asked him bluntly, "Couldn't a slack ropewalker make it across to the island on that cable?"

He looked at her. Marged met his eyes and moved away.

I was standing where I could see his face. If you've ever seen a clown with make-up on looking sick to the depths of his soul, it's a sight you'll never forget.

Ashley saw me looking at him, and he went over to the shoe box trailer, like a whipped cur slinking into his kennel. George Crawford watched him until he was out of sight, then Crawford went in after him.

Right there the bank of the river was high enough to furnish protection, even if the second dam did break; but water from the second dam, added to what was in the river now, would sweep clean over the island. As it was, there was water over the trailer park already. You could see it swirling around the wheels of the trailers in the glare of the police spotlights.

The police worked their two-way radios. A fire engine showed up with red spotlights, clanging bells, and an extension ladder, but they couldn't do any good.

Then out of the shoe box trailer came a figure. I saw him streak across to the wet cable that was swaying drunkenly over the stream . . . A moment later, and the clown, with his make-up, baggy pants, big red nose and white paint around the mouth, was inching out over the water.

Silence fell on the crowd, so that the roar of the water seemed louder than ever.

The clown knew his stuff. His feet, in soft-soled shoes, moved swiftly, sliding along the wet cable as though each foot had eyes in the toes and brains in the heels. I looked around to see if I could find Marged. She was standing about ten feet behind me . . . There's only one man in the world that could bring that look to the eyes of a girl like Marged.

I turned back and watched the clown. He made the centre abutment on the bridge, walked across the piled wreckage and found the cable again.

There was something in the way he stepped when he walked across that litter of wreckage on the centre pier that gave him away. A little stiffness of the back, something in the way he carried his head.

I knew then what had happened.

George Crawford had put on a clown outfit, made up his face and gone across the cable, doubling for Ashley. I remembered

now that I'd heard Crawford had been good on a slack wire in his younger days.

Would it fool Marged ? Would it be fair to her if it did fool her ? Would Ashley be low enough to ride to romance on the strength of another's sacrifice ? I had a vision of him sitting there in the shoe box trailer, cowering and shaking, while his friend doubled for him and made the rescue . . .

I might not have done it if I'd thought, but since George was going to all this trouble, I backed him up. I ran out to the police cars. "Put those spotlights down low," I yelled. "Keep the beams down low so he can see the cable. When he turns back, don't shine any light on his face. The glare will throw him off."

The officer in charge nodded and transmitted orders.

The clown was over on the island now. The spotlights threw a weird shadow as he sloshed through the water that was halfway to his waist. Then, when he came out of the trailer carrying the baby, the deep-throated yell that went up sounded high above the noise of the storm and the rushing water.

"The lights," I yelled, "keep those lights *down !*"

The spotlights were lowered. We could see only the dim figure of the clown. He took a sheet and made a sling for the baby, bound it to his breast, then found a long pole to use for balance.

With that pole, there was nothing to it.

The townspeople stood spellbound, but I knew it was in the bag. The cable was holding firm as a rock. The kid was tied up snug in the sling, and the balancing pole made it just like getting money from home.

He reached the pier in the centre of the stream, and there was a rousing cheer. The clown waved a hand, started across the littered wreckage, and then suddenly stopped with a peculiar wrenching twist. He tried to raise his left leg. He couldn't make it. His body twisted, and he went down in the tangled, splintered planking. Twice again he tried to get up, and couldn't make it.

Somewhere behind me, a woman sobbed.

Time just stopped. Whatever the watches said didn't mean anything. It could have been five minutes that the figure remained on that middle abutment, pinned motionless. Apparently he'd sprained an ankle, and caught it in the wreckage. Maybe even broken a leg.

People started making impossible suggestions that couldn't be carried out. I watched the door of the shoe box trailer. It seemed like an eternity before the second clown came stumbling out.

I guess the crowd didn't get it for a while. Ashley was well

out on the cable before the thing registered, then once more the crowd became silent.

Ashley moved with the sure co-ordination of the master on a slack wire. Balancing from the waist, he raced across that cable as though he'd been riding on rollers.

Crawford tried to struggle up, but couldn't make it. He started untying the sheet when Ashley was still fifteen feet away from the abutment. Ashley took the kid and the sheet, tied the sling around his chest, took the pole Crawford gave him, and came back across the eighty-one-foot gap. He hardly needed the pole, so straight and sure were his motions.

I don't think he even heard the cheers of the crowd. He handed the kid to its mother, turned right round, and went back over the wet cable. We could see him bending over Crawford. Then he was lifting. Then Crawford was riding piggyback.

It's one thing to carry a man piggyback on a slack wire. It's another thing to work your way up a wet cable with a grown man on your back. But Crawford was now helping in the balancing, and we could see his lips move as he seemed to be steadying Ashley with his voice.

It was a supreme test of nerve and skill. The rain lashed down in torrents. The river, fed by cloudbursts in the mountains, was a raging torrent. And here came Ashley, working his way up the cable.

Nearer he came—nearer—nearer—then suddenly he dropped the balancing pole, reached out and caught the rail on the part of the broken bridge that was still in place—and was on firm ground once more.

The crowd went wild. They hoisted him on heaving shoulders. The police sirens joined with the automobile horns in a screeching pandemonium of noise . . .

Crawford hobbled off to the shoe box trailer.

I went in after him. "Let me take a look at that ankle," I said.

"It's nothing."

"I'll look at it."

"It's nothing, I tell you."

I reached for the ankle. He kicked at me. I grabbed the leg and held it . . . There wasn't any swelling. I twisted the foot.

Crawford stopped struggling.

"All right," he said, "so what?"

"I just wanted to know."

There was murder in his eyes. "You going to tell anyone?"

"Don't be a fool. I just wanted to know."

Crawford said, "Being yellow is largely a matter of habit. You give in to fear the first time, and it's easier the second time.

The first thing you know, you're done. It takes something to jar you out of it, but if you can once get jarred out of it, you're cured. I know. I went through it once when I was a trapeze performer. I turned yellow. Tonight was the first time I ever dared get off the ground."

"That's what I thought," I said.

"Then you're not going to tell anyone?"

"Why the hell should I?"

We shook hands.

Then Crawford tore up a sheet, and I helped him bandage his perfectly sound ankle.

* * *

ANSWERS to BEHIND THE COUNTER on page 46

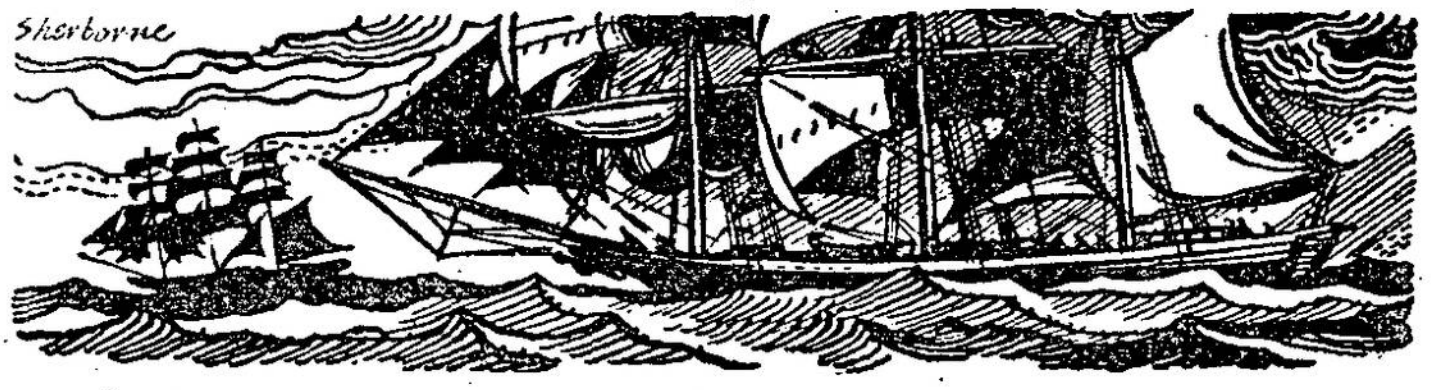
1. *Miss Matty in "Cranford," by Mrs. Gaskell.*
2. *The Merchant in "The Canterbury Tales," by Geoffrey Chaucer.*
3. *Sally Harrowell, who runs the tuck shop in "Tom Brown's Schooldays," by Thomas Hughes.*
4. *The goblins in "Goblin Market," by Christina Rossetti.*
5. *Kipps' uncle and aunt in "Kipps," by H. G. Wells.*
6. *The rich shoemaker in "The Red Shoes," by Hans Andersen.*
7. *Autolycus the Pedlar in "The Winter's Tale," by William Shakespeare.*
8. *Little Nell's grandfather in "The Old Curiosity Shop," by Charles Dickens.*
9. *Mr. Aeneas in "The Happy Hypocrite," by Max Beerbohm.*

* * *

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 160

Across. 1, Falteringly. 8, Fife. 9, Cabman. 12, This. 13, Rein. 14, Axe. 15, Neckwear. 17, Mantle. 18, Orlando. 20, Inhabit. 24, Floats. 26, Beeswing. 28, Ayr. 29, Scut. 31, Peat. 32, Mantua 33, Grey. 34, Regrettable.

Down. 2, Axis. 3, Tsetse. 4, Richard. 5, Nobleman. 6, Lear. 7, Standoffish. 8, Fiscal. 10, Neat. 11, Investigate. 16, Win. 19, Disaster. 21, His. 22, Bailey. 23, Abreast. 25, Ovum. 27, Enigma. 30, Tale. 31, Peel.



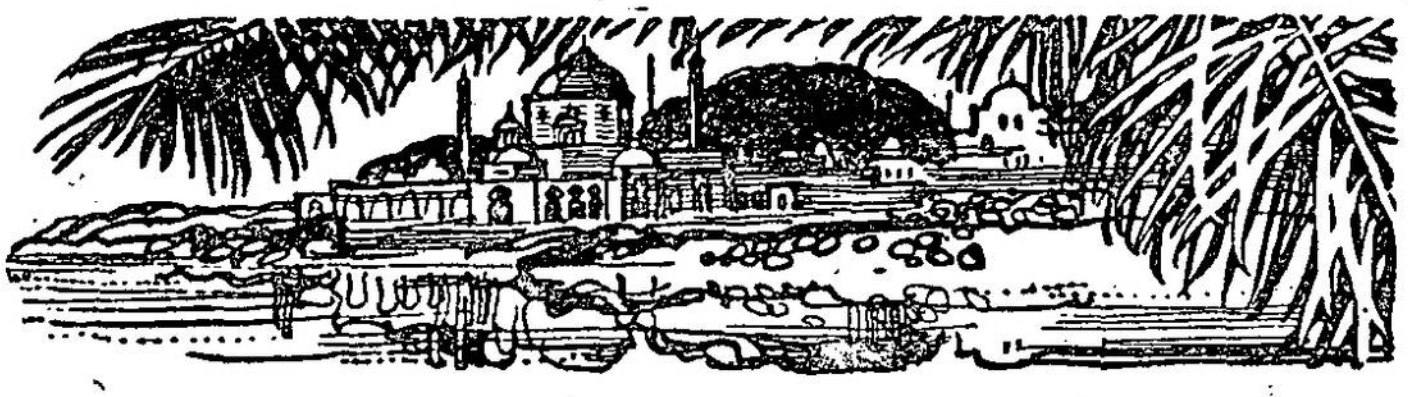
The last chapters of

FAIR WIND

TOM FLINT tells the story. First mate on the "Gerrymander," he is playing a devious game of his own against CAPTAIN BOLL, who is himself involved in fantastic and far-reaching schemes, and against the astute but embittered shipowner ROBERT CULVER. Flint is in love with HARRIET ADAMS, high-spirited daughter of the founder of the Culver and Adams shipping firm. She has sailed to the Far East with Culver as events there move to a climax.

BEFORE sundown of the next day, the *Aladdin*'s anchors splashed not one hundred yards down-stream from us. She loomed as a vengeance ship—so quiet and patient she seemed after stalking us over half the stretch of the Indies. With the aid of the glass, I studied her intently.

The first familiar face I saw belonged to Mr. Cott, now



TO JAVA

by GARLAND ROARK

Captain Cott. He eyed the *Gerrymander* from under drooping eyelids; and the stretch of his lips, hinting of a smile long anticipated, was every bit as patient as it was mocking.

Closer to the break in the poop, Mr. Culver stood with arms on the rail; he seemed relaxed and calm under hasty appraisal, though something about his iron-jawed face belied his pose. I saw him scan the ship from trucks to water line, from counter to bow; and there his eye held to the monstrosity carved by a drunk-crazed artist. The figurehead accepted the red glint of the sun like every other surface facing the west; it was then a red devil-bird that Culver saw.

A BOAT put out from Culver's ship and pulled towards us. Mr. Culver wanted me aboard the *Aladdin*, and I was soon standing in his august presence. As he glowered at me, showing his poor opinion of a man of Boll's choice, I thought, "Mister, you couldn't have timed your arrival better." The fall of the cash seemed made to order for what he surely had in mind.

He said at last, "I suppose you know why I am here. The news of Captain Boll's disgraceful conduct has been plastered across every newspaper in Boston."

"What disgraceful conduct, sir?" I asked.

"Do you stand there and pretend no knowledge of his dealing with slaves?"

"Oh, that." I smiled. "Why, he had no intention of violating slavery laws. Instead, he planned to return the girl to the Sultan in a bid for his favour. It was a good idea, a means of opening the cash trade in Borneo."

" Cash ! Cash ! " he growled. " I'm sick of hearing the word."

" So are the Dutch," I said.

" Which pleases me immensely," he returned. " I hear they have almost enough of the damned pieces now to finish him."

" Let us hope not, sir—for your sake."

" My sake ! You are impudent, young man. Fighting pirates ! " he said as if to himself. " Is there no end to his damnable escapades ? "

I savoured my reply. " Perhaps, sir, you need more officers like Mr. Cott." I saw his jaw harden. " But you," I added before he could voice his dominant self, " forget that expediency governs the Gerrymander Cash trade, of which you are a partner."

" I forget nothing, Mr. Flint ! " he snapped.

" No," a voice behind me said with friendly sarcasm, " Mr. Culver forgets nothing."

I spun about-face and saw Harriet.

She wore a white dress with a low, circular neck outlined in tiny ruffles. The heart-shaped, ruby-set pin I had given her in Singapore was fastened at the divide of her breasts. Her eyes leaped into mine, as did her smile of genuine welcome. A surge of pride, joy, and admiration assailed me as she advanced with extended hand. I wanted to shout, " Harriet ! " to sweep her into my arms, though I let my eyes say all. She did not remove her hand at once ;- she looked deep inside me in one serious moment before saying :

" It is nice to see you." She smiled before adding : " Tom."

I could not manage an answer ; I was too shaken. My eyes left her face, after what seemed an eternity, in search of a wedding ring on her left finger. It was not there. She smiled, followed my eyes to her finger, and said, " Not yet."

" Or never ! " I added staunchly. Then I asked, " Where's Blossom ? "

" Below."

" Mr. Flint," Culver's voice intruded, " what's this I hear about Captain Boll and this Rajah of Mataram ? " As I turned to face him with a frown, he said, " I hear Boll is his official Foreign Minister." I nodded, but I was watching Harriet.

He smiled savagely, adding, " I must meet this Rajah of Mataram, Mr. Flint. I think I can relieve Captain Boll of that foolish title and complete my work here. The sooner the better," he snapped.

THAT night I doubled the guard. The ship, loaded with treasure, was, after all, Culver's, and I was afraid that he might decide to claim it.

I sent a note to Harriet by Chess and then paced the quarter-deck impatiently. He returned soon and said with a knowing grin on his face, " She wants you to sit with her on the *Aladdin*'s deck, sir. She said Mr. Culver and Aunt Emmy—I think that's the name—were playing cards in the saloon. I saw old evil eye on deck, sir. He was—"

" Damn Mr. Cott ! " I said, moving off.

The *Aladdin*'s gangway was down, and there on deck, smiling down at me, was Harriet.

We moved aft, to chairs under a sailmaker's awning. I drew a chair close to her, where I could look to my heart's content.

I spoke out of a trance, " Harriet, you've come back at last."

" Yes." She smiled as her eyes examined my unruly hair, my face.

" And I'm trying to pin a star down for another view," I said. " I was a fool for not kidnapping you when I had the chance."

" I'd make a poor captive," she said. " I'm not a slave girl, like—what is her name, the girl whom Captain Boll bought ? "

" Kim Kim."

" A fascinating name—Kim Kim. Tell me about her." I told her sketchily all there was to tell, concluding with, " I imagine she's with Boll in Java." She seemed unsatisfied.

" But I didn't come here to talk about Boll and Kim Kim, Harriet. I want to take you to the Balinese village, I'd rather hear you, and about you."

" There's so little to tell," she said, lifting her eyes to the starry sky. " Our friend sends you his best."

" And how is he ? " I asked absently.

She eyed me directly. " Worried." She added, " It's quite a story —if you're interested."

" Should I be more eager to hear that than—"

" You should," she reproved me with a little laugh. " The saloon may empty any moment."

" All the more reason for visiting the village. Listen to their music, Harriet."

" Amos has been losing money," she replied firmly.

" So Amos has lost money," I said. " But kidnapping you seems more urgent—or will you come willingly ? " I was up and drawing her towards me.

" Mr. Flint ! " Her eyes belied her tone of voice ; they twinkled, pleased, though they wanted total acquiescence from the male.

" Tom," I suggested. " You're going to a lot of trouble not to say it. Why ? "

Her answer was, " Tom " ; that and a challenging smile which did nothing to mask her interest. I asked if she was ready to go. " Suppose you get Aunt Emily's permission," she countered.

I did not have far to go : Aunt Emily was near enough to hear my words. She said, " Permission for what, and who is it ? "

" Tom Flint, chief mate aboard the G-53 ; or may I say *Gerry-mander* in your presence, madam ? "

" *Gerrymander*," she snapped. " So you're the young man who flitted about our ship on another moonlight night. Well, what do you want ? "

" The pleasure of escorting your niece to the Balinese village. You see, a sailor doesn't like to spend a night off aboard a ship."

" True." Her eyes probed me from over her glasses. Her lips were drawn into a stern little pucker that seemed to lend her small figure an authority often assumed by persons of diminutive stature. " True," she repeated. " And once a sailor, always a sailor. Mr. Flint, Harriet and I shall accept your invitation."

I made the best of a situation, and when we returned to the *Aladdin*, Harriet's aunt said she had seldom enjoyed an evening more.

On deck, I held the little lady's hand and said with simple directness, " You're good company, Aunt Emily."

She put up gruffness for defence as she replied, " Why don't you admit that I was unwanted, Mr. Flint ? "

" Why, I thought you knew that." I grinned.

That did it : she thawed. " I like an honest man, even if he is a rebel." She studied me seriously for a moment before saying, " You remind me of my Jim in many ways. Perhaps the only thing that's wrong with you is the company you keep."

I said, " Why, I thought you liked Captain Boll, ma'am."

" And I'm not so sure that I don't, Tom Flint," she said.

She left us alone on a deck flooded with moonlight. Harriet smiled at the moon, the village, and then at me. She broke the silence mischievously with :

" As I was saying, Amos has been losing money." I started, though I sat back, resigned to the story : I'd let her get it off her mind on this night in order to claim the tropical evenings ahead.

SHE told me of the coastal freight war at home in Boston, of the steam freighters and barges Culver had put in against De Loach.

" Amos was marked for ruin, Tom. You can imagine my sense of entrapment, can't you ? "

" Aye." I saw her, the biggest stockholder in both firms, between the hammer and anvil of warring factions.

" You'll remember I said something in one of my letters about postponing my answer to Mr. Culver's proposal. I thought of my reasons for doing just that and decided on a plan. I invited Amos to be our guest at dinner several days later. In the interim, I was—well, exceptionally nice to Mr. Culver.

" Amos came, and at dinner he and Culver were more in accord than they had been for years.

" But later on when I tried to bring about a real reconciliation, a partnership in fact, with the name ' Culver, Adams and De Loach,' Culver started out of the room, saying the matter was one for the directorate to decide, and one which he would rigorously oppose.

" But it never reached the directorate. Amos said he could pretend he had forgiven Mr. Culver and let it go at that, for my sake. But there was another obligation that outweighed that point. That obligation, he said, was a partnership he had promised you, Tom."

" And your answer to Culver ? "

" Well, the Boston papers carried big headlines before the week ended : ' BOSTON CAPTAIN INDICTED FOR SLAVE TRADING IN JAVA ! ' Mr. Culver found it necessary to extricate firm and ship from the cash-piece boomerang. He seemed not in the least annoyed when I suggested that we shelve the subject of marriage until our return from the Indies."

" But had he insisted on your answer, Harriet—what then ? "

"Tom, I have never had the slightest intention of marrying Mr. Culver."

THE sun rose above the mountains next morning, as the Rajah sent his Prime Minister down river to invite Culver and his party to the palace. He promised to return for them at three. The golden schooner was punctual, and I left the *Gerrymander* in charge of Mr. Blue.

As I boarded the Rajah's schooner, I saw Harriet, her aunt, and Culver on deck. The same patchwork sails of brilliant reds and yellows, and the batik-clad oarsmen lent the Rajah's schooner royal splendour. Their striped turbans glinting in the sun, their golden earrings dangling to the collar brocade of thigh-length coats, the oarsmen pulled hard at long red oars heading up river.

The schooner pointed more to northward, and soon her silken sails bellied; the oars relaxed and the ship gathered headway. Then Harriet cried out, "Look Tom!" She had said "Tom" in a manner that caused Culver to jerk his fiercest eye around, and caused me an upsurge of joy.

She was looking at the Rajah's red sandstone and white marble palace. It sat atop a hundred long sandstone steps stretching in a quarter circle and broken by a dozen fountains and pools, each of which lay in a frame of flowering plants beneath a Hindu statue. The edifice itself was of Hindu-Mogul style: it sat in the centre of a huge terrace some three hundred feet in length, a square building with a dome at each corner, a larger one in the centre, each topped with gold balls of three sizes ending in a spearhead. The dome of white marble, dazzling in the sunlight, was streaked with sheets of gold and set with agates, jaspers, and bloodstones.

Harriet, impressed, said, "It's unbelievable!" Culver, unable to contain his shock, glared and said something about the insane East and its prodigality.

"Who is this Rajah of Mataram?" Harriet asked.

I had not completed my account of the Rajah's doings when Culver fell behind to assist Aunt Emily up the steps.

"Harriet," I said quickly, "the terraced gardens are beautiful in the moonlight. May I show them to you this evening—minus Aunt Emily?"

She looked at me and wrinkled up her nose in a mischievous smile. "Yes, Tom."

THE Rajah awaited us in the same room where Boll and I were received. He studied Culver closely, though when introductions were done with he said:

"You may sit with me, Miss Adams. You are most welcome." He did not take his eyes off her.

"You are not married? Excellent, excellent. You are not in love?"

"Perhaps." Harriet laughed.

He scoffed, "Love, my beautiful one, is not a subject for doubt. You are in love or you are not. If your heart is open to conquest, I shall win it."

" But, Your Highness, aren't you married ? "

" I have many wives, but not one of them is as lovely as you. Speak your heart, or I shall make love to you. At once ! " he snapped.

" I think I am in love, Your Highness." She smiled.

" With which one of them ? " he asked, pointing to Culver and me.

" Your Highness ! " She laughed. " They are both listening."

His face thinned perceptibly. " Light of the stars, my palace is yours. There shall be entertainment of an unusual sort in your honour tomorrow evening."

With that he dismissed her and bowed low until she and Aunt Emily had passed through the big doorway. Then he raised his head and faced Culver. His crafty glance moved on to me.

" Be seated," he ordered, rising from the throne. " Mr. Culver of Culver and Adams," he said pensively, glancing at neither of us. " A shipowner who, I imagine, is here to punish an obstinate captain."

" Correct," Culver said.

" You will speak only when addressed," the Rajah said sharply. He paced back and forth in meditative silence. " I, too, have a score to settle with your illustrious captain, Mr. Culver. But I am more interested in his future than in his past." He stopped at the far end of the huge room and faced us.

" As you know, I not only honoured Captain Boll with high office ; I made it possible for him to continue his trading scheme when the Dutch threatened to stop him. Why ? Because I plan to use your captain. But he is slow in accepting my proposition. Very slow."

He moved closer, his energetic eyes flashing. " It would be worth much to you, Mr. Culver, if I were to relieve him of his high office, wouldn't it ? "

" Yes, Your Highness," Culver replied.

" I have been thinking," the Rajah said, stepping closer to us. " Now if I removed him from office, thereby letting the Dutch and you cast lots for him, he would be quick to accept my proposition."

Culver's face assumed a curious expression, though he did not ask why the prince wanted Boll.

" However," the Rajah said, resuming his ambulant conversation, " Captain Boll is a man to be admired. To toss him to you without any more reason than to speed him to a decision in my favour would be most unfair. Such behaviour would not be in keeping with the code of sportsmanship expected of a great rajah."

I sat tense, expecting some decision already fashioned in his scheming head. He faced us, his hands behind his back, and asked a simple question :

" Mr. Culver, do you possess any skill in the game of checkers ? "

" A little," Culver replied, surprised.

" Excellent. It is only fair to tell you that I am a skilful player. I have no intention of letting you win from me." Culver seemed as perplexed as I, though he said nothing.

" However, I have lost upon occasion," the Rajah said slowly. " Mr. Culver, I challenge you to a game of outdoor checkers tomorrow evening. In order to make the game interesting to the spectators as

well as ourselves, we shall play for a prize—Captain Boll.

" If you win, Mr. Culver, I shall relieve Captain Boll of his office."

THE moon stood strong in the east at eight that evening; it flooded the peaks and valleys in a silver path to the romantic gardens of the Rajah. The palace was bathed in moonlight and the gardens and statues, the fountains and terraces joined the Mogul edifice to complete a picture as unsubstantial as a dream. Soon all that was missing arrived. With Harriet, the night was indeed a dream.

We walked in silence to the still river before Harriet broke the spell. " What sort of a person is this Kim Kim ? " she asked.

" A gorgeous woman," I replied; " with the mind of a child and the heart of a tigress. She loves Boll."

" And he ? "

" I don't know," I replied. " However, he did take her in his arms at the Lagoon of Lor. And that is a lot from Boll."

" Is that where you met the pirates ? " I nodded. " Why not tell me all that has happened since I saw you last ? "

" You mean I haven't ? " I grinned.

" Only Kim Kim," she said. " And that story was too brief."

" Very well "—I grinned—" here goes."

She followed my every word with eager ears and eyes until I raced into the wake of the great adventure, ending my story with :

" Boll was at the height of his glory. But he made a few mistakes."

We had reached a simple little bower beside the top pool. I sat beside her and watched her pensive eyes as they lingered in review of my story, as they brightened under the Balinese moon over Mataram.

" So Captain Boll is hemmed in from all sides."

" He is. And now the trap is ready to close on him. Listen to this, Harriet. Today the Rajah challenged Mr. Culver to a game of Mogul checkers." I told her all.

" It is just as well," she said. " This cash trade must end before it causes more trouble." She turned her face from the moon-splashed blossoms in the water and studied me. " Would you side with Boll, Tom, if I asked you not to ? "

The perfume of her, the sight of her sitting so close to me and wearing a tropical red flower in a moonlit garden, all were cogent reasons why I should say, " No, if you ask it." But I did not.

" Why should I throw everything overboard when I'm pledged to help De Loach mend a wrong ? And even if De Loach changed his mind, it doesn't alter the situation from another angle. As you know, Culver has little use for me. And I'm not too fond of him. There's also another reason. Do you care to hear it ? "

She studied me from a restful position on the reclining bamboo settee, her eyes dancing with amusement or applause as she smiled into my face over her shoulder.

" Yes, Tom Flint."

" Then open your pretty ears. I'm not about to help Lord Culver get his selfish business done with so he can break records in getting

you back to Boston and out of my life. Not I, when I'm so much in love with you it hurts ! "

Her eyes widened with that, and her lips lost their smile. " Tom, she said, " why did you have to fall in love with me ? "

I glanced at the star points in her hair, dancing like the images of the moon in the deep pools of her eyes. Her hands reached for mine as she frowned and lowered her eyes. I saw them raised to look at me. Her hand squeezed mine, and then she was on her feet.

I was standing also. " Harriet, even Kim Kim knows her heart. She doesn't fight it as you do." I was holding her close ; my fingers at her chin tilted her face up to mine for the truth.

" Kim Kim. Is she happy ? " she asked softly. Her fingers twisted a button at my collar which caught and held her eyes for a moment, and only a moment.

My arms closed tightly about her as I reached for her lips. They were as willing as mine, and I forgot scene and setting, Boll and Culver, rajahs, ships, and men as her arms crept sinuously about my shoulders and neck.

" YOU asked if Kim Kim is happy, Harriet. She follows her heart. You're learning a little about happiness which comes with complete surrender."

" I was taught differently," she said softly. " But I like it this way."

I kissed her again.

" It's tropical," she said in a voice that seemed to encompass a mystery without trying to fathom it. " Something steals over one here."

" Is that why you kissed me, Harriet ? Are you trying to say you don't love me ? "

Her answer was not quick in coming, though I knew it must emerge sooner or later. She smiled up at me with questioning eyes and asked : " Kim Kim won't be happy if Boll returns her to the Rajah, will she ? "

" No."

Her voice hushed me as she said pensively : " Boll and Kim Kim."

Then I said, " Tom Flint and Harriet." She smiled up at me quickly as if she were thinking the same thing. " Does that sound as good ? " She nodded slowly.

" Then you do love me, don't you, Harriet ? "

" Yes, Tom—since that morning in Mr. Ruscomb's office. Remember ? I tried to tell myself I didn't love you, since it wasn't the practical thing for me to do—under the circumstances. No, Tom "—she smiled—" I shouldn't have let myself fall in love with you."

" But why shouldn't you fall in love with me ? Is it the difference in your world and mine ? "

" No, Tom, it's nothing like that. Besides, Aunt Emily likes you."

" That's fine," I said. " But since it's customary for a man to propose to the girl he loves, I'd like to know if there is any reason why I should be an exception to the rule."

" Tom," she said, moving slowly back to her seat, " I might as well

tell you. Mr. Culver and I are in accord in so far as Captain Boll is concerned. You are on the other side. I do not favour Amos's attempt at some hidden vengeance through you. You know this, and yet you are opposing me there, too. I told Amos just what I'm about to tell you—my second trip to the East was to end all this."

"Wait! Hold on there, Harriet. What about those letters? The last one, for example. You asked me to look about for some way to serve all of us, Culver, Amos, you and me. You said: 'I have such confidence in you that I dare ask it.' Remember?"

"Yes."

"Then why tack away from sandalwood and spice to storm?"

"Because Mr. Culver is what he is, and there is no hope of changing him. You and Amos are younger. You are both working against me when you persist with foolish aims. Tom, what does Amos really want?"

"The *Gerrymander*."

"The—*Gerrymander!* Why?"

"To paint her figurehead a bright red, he said, Harriet—and to re-name her the *Robert Culver*. All for the last laugh in Boston."

"No!" She seemed never more surprised. "What an odd sense of revenge! But if he gets the ship, I stand to lose, Tom."

"And gain," I said quickly. "Remember, you're a big part of De Loach and Company."

"I didn't mean materially. But I don't like it, Tom Flint." She got up and faced me with unmistakable agitation in her eyes and voice. "And I won't tolerate it!"

"Why?" I asked. "Afraid you'll be exposed and embarrassed?"

"I no longer fear that," she replied militantly.

I sighed, "We're certainly off the subject. If I remember, I was about to propose to a lady who had just said she loved me. I wish Blossom were here."

She was quick with her reply: "Tom Flint, if you love me enough to propose to me, then you'll put aside Amos's vindictive aims and help me straighten everything out. Amos will listen to you."

I grinned at her. "You forget I'm working for a partnership in De Loach and Company."

Her hand reached for mine, and she smiled as before. "Tom, help me with Amos. Write to him. Tell him the attainment of his ultimate goal cannot leave you with any feeling of accomplishment. Do that and I shall see that you get your partnership."

"Harriet," I said, "I'm sorry. I can't turn back now."

There was neither shock nor resentment in her face as she studied me; a faint trace of hurt or disappointment, perhaps, but that was all.

"Suppose I ordered you to do it, would you?" she asked.

"I can't, Harriet. If I did, I wouldn't be Tom Flint."

I caught her hand and closed the distance between us, and when she turned away from me, I drew her close.

"No. Not now." She smiled at me and shrugged slightly. Then she turned to go. "Thanks for a wonderful evening, Tom." She moved slowly down the steps.

AS the first stars popped out the next evening, three long, lonely blasts from a conch shell sounded from the village.

The Rajah, sitting on the grand terrace surrounded by his guests, hurriedly got to his feet and moved off. Soon three blasts of a conch were returned from the palace roof. There is something weird and lugubrious about a conch note; it sounds coeval with the ageless islands, reminding one of the lassitude of a dispirited race long dead.

I did not learn the significance of this signal until later in the evening—it was an order to loot a vessel stranded on the reef.

Harriet, her aunt, and Culver arrived, and the great outdoor dinner moved into its stride. The setting faced the moon. Sultans, rajahs, and merchants sat apart from the Rajah's dancing girls, the sky a roof, with colourful frescoes on the plaster walls gleaming in the lantern light on one side, the moonlit river and valley on the other. Barefoot servants served everyone where they sat. Harriet avoided me. She spoke, but to "Mr. Flint," and turned her attention to Culver.

I had heard of checkers played in the Mogul manner, though I had never expected to witness the sight. A conventional checkerboard was set up between the Rajah and Culver, while on a terrace some six feet below them, a huge checkerboard of black and white marble squares, each a yard wide, was lighted with torches at each corner. Soon the Rajah's dancing girls were placed on this amazing duplicate board, twelve on each end, one team representing Culver's checkermen, the other team the Rajah's.

The girls were dressed for the occasion. Culver's wore soft, white waist sarongs of silk, upon which mythical fishes were outlined in gold. Hand-tooled leather headdresses, sitting high on their heads, were splashed with lustrous seed pearls. Their necklaces and bracelets were white, their breasts were uncovered in Balinese manner. The Rajah's twelve girls were similarly dressed, though their silk sarongs were of red and gold of a fiery brilliance, and their headpieces were gilded.

The Rajah ordered his noblemen to see that the girls were moved from square to square in response to the play on the small board. With that, he, representing the black, moved first as the game demanded. But his finger was not lifted from the ebony disc as he turned to Harriet and said:

"You, of course, will champion one of us. Which?"

Culver, glaring at the Rajah for delaying the game at the start, glanced sharply up at Harriet, who studied the board, the faces of the players, and, at last, the twenty-four girls on the marble board. Every eye and ear strained for her decision, which was not long in coming:

"Since I rebel at the thought of a human being's fate resulting from such sport, I shall champion neither of you." She did not smile as she looked squarely into the eyes of both players and then into mine.

"But," she added, "I hope you lose, Your Highness."

She had spoken for my ears, said her face: since I had refused to help her unseat Boll, then she would proceed without me. If Culver won, the Rajah would strip Boll of title and office and throw him to the Dutch and Culver.

I grinned—to show her I stood firm.

The Rajah smiled as he lifted his finger. The game was in progress. A nobleman moved a red-clad girl to the corresponding position on the marble board. Culver quickly moved up a man to defending position and the Rajah slid his first active man up for Culver's jump. It was taken, and the girl on the big board was led from the game. Culver's position on the board ran obliquely from the double corner on his right, leaving the Rajah free to move a man down for the gain of a jump into free ground. Culver moved up for the same take, though the Rajah brought up a man to save his forward position. Then Culver moved up for another jump, and in doing so, he traded even with the Rajah.

Seated at the edge of the upper terrace, sultans and rajahs, the merchant princes of the Celebes and Moluccas, followed the game with enthusiasm heightened by the betting. Since all were sure the Rajah would win, they wagered heavily on which of the girls representing him would stand when the game ended. There was whispered conversation among them as they exchanged remarks that had to do with the anatomy of the beauties on the big board.

Culver and the Rajah were soon down to five men each, and then in two moves the game changed—Culver earned a king to harass the rear of the Rajah's attack; but the Rajah leaped into the opening and raced to kingdom one jump ahead of the pursuing king. He moved out fast under a crown and eliminated Culver's helpless man in another move.

With kingship on the big board, a girl's headdress was replaced with a golden pagoda-like crown. The "kings" towered above the remaining beauties.

The game wore on slowly; the moon climbed high in the sky; the remaining Balinese girls stood like statues without any sense of fatigue, like gorgeous flowers plucked and potted in squares of marble. One by one they departed from the extravagant checkerboard until only four remained, two in white, and two in red.

Skill asserted itself, and the game was reduced to two kings for Culver against a single defender for the Rajah. But here the game slowed. Back and forth the kings slid, and back and forth the three girls moved on the polished marble.

I felt Harriet's eyes on me again. I turned to look at her. She smiled.

Harriet startled players and guests when she interrupted the tense play. I was the most surprised of the lot when she said, "Your Highness, may I represent you on the terrace board?"

He brought a silk handkerchief to his face as he studied her. "For luck?" he asked.

"For luck," she said, flashing a smile.

As her aunt ordered her to sit, remarking, "Such scandalous conduct!" I stepped forward to escort her to the lower terrace, asking: "Whose luck? I thought you wanted Culver to win."

She stopped and faced me. "Tom, the Miss Adams of the shipping firm does favour Mr. Culver. But she is not here tonight."

"I don't understand," I said. "Who stands in her place?"

There was no answer other than a mysterious smile as she moved to the big marble checkerboard.

She made a lovely addition to the picturesque scene, her eyes and smile dancing with a rare spontaneity. She swished gracefully back and forth in the corner, as the noblemen commanded, a slave herself to the Rajah's racing brain. She seemed more glamorous under the tall golden headdress than her Balinese sisters of the game.

Two kings on the small board chased one from one double corner to the other. Then the Rajah moved between Culver's kings, and one Balinese girl walked from the big board.

The game could not go on for ever, I realized. Nor did it. The Rajah's jump had sent him in retreat towards his single corner, where four moves later Harriet stood facing the triumphant Balinese girl representing Culver who had hemmed her in to end the game.

Harriet simply stood there before saying, " Tom ! We've lost ! " I leaped to the big checkerboard where, under the eyes of all, I took her in my arms.

" Yes, we've lost," I replied. " But why do you say we ? Isn't this what you wanted ? "

" It was. But one of us had to give in, Tom. And—well, you were too stubborn."

My lips were pressed to hers in another moment. I was unaware of the Rajah's smile, of Aunt Emily's cry of " Harriet ! " or of Culver's angry glare. It required another presence there to bring me back to the world of realities. I looked up quickly as I heard :

" Nice work, Mr. Flint."

AT that moment Boll had returned. He knew nothing of the item at stake in the game, though he soon learned of it. He said to the Rajah, " I'll make my report in private and get back to my ship."

" Captain Boll "—the Rajah smiled—" matters of state can rest until tomorrow afternoon, at which time you will tender your formal resignation."

Boll said nothing as he eyed the Rajah calmly.

" It so happens, Captain Boll, that Mr. Culver and I have just completed a most interesting game of Mogul checkers. There was an item which we played for. Seldom do I lose. It is most regrettable that I lost this evening."

" And that item ? " Boll said.

" You, Captain," the Rajah said easily.

Boll glanced from the Rajah to Culver, then to me and Harriet. As his eyes fell on the Rajah again, he said, " Go on."

The Rajah got to his feet. " Perhaps when you hand me your resignation, you will find it advantageous to accept another proposition which urgently awaits your decision." He smiled.

" So you have thrown me to the Dutch and Mr. Culver. Now your proposition offers me escape from both, doesn't it ? "

Said the Rajah, " You possess a sharp mind."

" I have to keep it sharp," Boll said, smiling, " since I'm forced to deal with Dutchmen, pirates, shipowners—and rajahs. Now this

idea of yours to speed my acceptance of your offer was very clever. But was it clever enough, Rajah ? "

A superior smile on the Rajah's face was his answer. The words that followed seemed unnecessary : " So clever, Captain Boll, that the ruin of your cash-piece trade and my removing you from office could reach Dutch ears at the same time. What then ? "

" Should that take place, and should Mr. Culver find it in his heart to need me no longer "—he glanced at Culver as he said it—" I would be a very slow fool if I failed to join you. But none of these things has taken place."

" They are as inevitable as the sunrise, Captain Boll." He smiled.

Boll seemed to tire of talk. As if he had toyed with a game of sport for the sheer joy of tumbling an opponent at will, he said, " Do you think I trusted you any more than you did me ? No. Now you want my resignation. It's too bad, since you went to a lot of trouble to make that one mistake."

" Mistake ? " The Rajah stiffened somewhat.

" Yes. You're as changeable as the value of the Gerrymander Cash. I've known this for some time. And since I seldom deal with whimsical men without tightening all the braces, Rajah, I wrote a letter to the Governor-General—not as Captain Boll, but as the respected emissary of the Rajah of Mataram. I have here a copy."

The Rajah, nonplussed, accepted the paper and read. Boll held his quarter-deck smile and waited as the Rajah hurriedly devoured its contents with frowns and a general tightening of his facial expression. " Captain Boll," he snapped, " you resort to pretence."

" Do I ? " Boll put convincingly. " I posted the original letter with the owner of the Big Coffin Saloon in Soerabaja with orders for him to deliver it to the Dutch if I failed to pick it up within two weeks. The Dutch, Rajah, don't like pirates."

I knew then that the letter contained the Rajah's scheme to put a new Pulo Besar in the waters of the Indies.

The Rajah's laugh was lacking in mirth or complete self-assurance. He rallied with a natural reply : " You lack proof, Captain Boll, and my word of denial would outweigh your charge with the Dutch."

Boll shrugged. " Perhaps you're right. I'm not interested in the results—any more than I'm interested in the detailed entries in my ship's deck log, which were made on this very night—following an exchange of conch blasts. A vessel on the reefs was, in violation of Dutch law, looted."

The Rajah started. His eyes narrowed quickly and sent flashes surely engendered by ideas of murder running free in his crafty mind as he said, " You are beginning to annoy me, Captain."

" The schooner put up a fight," Boll said. " It was great sport to watch your men fall into the current. I wouldn't have missed it even for a game of living checkers."

" Enough ! " the stadtholder of Mataram snapped. " What is your price ? "

" Now that is different, Rajah. But one thing at a time. I'll send Mr. Flint to see you soon with the copy of this letter, which

will secure for you the original. He'll name the price." He swept Harriet and me with his eyes and let them rest on Culver.

He added with a chuckle, "He'll name a fine price, since it will be my wedding gift to him."

With that he turned to me and asked, before moving off, "Coming along, Mr. Flint?"

ON the way to the *Gerrymander*, Boll said to me, "Mr. Flint, there isn't a cheap metal in the Indies. I found an expensive alloy in Batavia, and I ordered a few hundred thousand cash pieces struck. But the old metalworker went straight to the Dutch with it. We're out of cash pieces, and we can't get any more in time to save the trade."

"Have the Dutch redeemed that one cash piece over?" I asked.

"Not yet. But when I don't appear with more of them in trade centres, they will flood the banks."

He chuckled and said, "I didn't expect this to happen yet, but I'd just as soon deal with Culver now as later."

"You expected it, then?" I asked. "Eventually?"

He dealt me a great surprise when he replied, "I did not, though I prepared myself for it. You'll learn how when Lord Culver sends for me." He added, "And when he does that, Mr. Flint, you'll take Culver's picture down and wrap it nicely. On second thought, I'll reserve that pleasure for myself." He laughed as the glistening yards of the *Gerrymander* drew closer under the big moon over the Jangkok River.

"Just you and I and Mr. Wulsin will go to see Mr. Culver." When I asked why he included the old bosun, he said that Mr. Wulsin was a partner in the cash trade also. "We're moving into a showdown, Mr. Flint."

"So I gather," I said.

"And while we're talking of a showdown, where do you stand in all this?" he asked.

"Same stand," I replied.

"So you won't name your employer or purpose?" I answered negatively, causing him to ask if I favoured him over Culver.

"That I do, sir," I said emphatically.

"And after that, Mr. Flint?"

"Same stand."

"You know I might be making a mistake in carrying you along in my plans after tonight."

"You might," I agreed.

"But I make few mistakes. All you could want, as I see it, is money in your own right before you marry the Adams fortune. And when the shares are divided, and when you milk the Rajah, you'll have money."

I was pleased. He continued to place money above everything else. His own shortsightedness there helped cover in his mind any other motive I nursed. If he had known just what I planned to ask of the Rajah, he would not have sat so securely behind his dollar-mark

judgment. Nor would he have revealed his plans for the future.

My mind had reached back to that night when the *Gerrymander* eased in to anchorage off Little Fortune Island. I heard the splash of an iron box dropped overboard by a mutinous crew!

Boll needed those cash pieces which rested in seven fathoms. With them he could sustain their false value for a time. Culver, too, needed them: with that iron box in his possession Culver could, by threatening to give them to the Dutch, dictate Boll's future in his own uncompromising style.

If Boll emerged the victor over Culver, then— "Aye! By God and St. Ebenezer," I thought, "that's the time those cash pieces would serve *you*, Tom Flint!"

Boll's voice broke in on my thoughts, "Mr. Flint, you'll get the ship ready for a voyage tomorrow. We're going to drive hell out of her soon." I turned a sharp eye on him. "To Soenda Strait," he said, "and Little Fortune Island."

I managed to cover my surprise and disappointment. I thought he had forgotten those cash pieces there, though I might have known better. I managed to ask him in calm voice:

"Why do you want to go there?"

"Cash pieces. Remember? A little more money, Mr. Flint, and a chance to prolong the Dutch charge of fraud. We can restore confidence with cash pieces and trade for the loose cash as we do it."

"You're almighty sure of yourself, aren't you? Well," I said, "I'm for you. And I'm out to get all I can, including what the Rajah has to offer." I faced him then and said, "Let me have that letter, sir. Something tells me I'd better deal with that fox, the Rajah, in a hurry."

THE Rajah granted me an audience without any waste of time and asked me to name my price. I did, causing him to stare at me with unbelief. He could not understand that any man with so useful a weapon should want less than gold or jewels. But my request more than appealed to him, since he was convinced that through me he could strike harder at Boll, whom he now hated with a vengeance. And my request, in the form of a demand, was simply this:

He should send a swift schooner ahead of us to Little Fortune Island and raise the box of cash pieces in seven fathoms off the northeast anchorage. A light schooner could beat and fly wing and wing where a big square-rigger would be handicapped by weight. And barring reverses, the schooner, with a day's start on us, should reach that spot off the Sumatra coast ahead of our ship. There the schooner would wait with the cash pieces—if she succeeded in finding them—with a white pennant under the Dutch bars.

The Rajah approved my plan. He had a schooner, the *Nautch Girl*, at anchor not far away.

The day was breaking when I boarded the *Gerrymander* with a chest of treasure which the Rajah had presented to me as a wedding present with a double purpose—it should serve to satisfy Boll that I had demanded money. I could hardly wait to give the chest to Harriet and to tell her of my success.

Instead, I decided to visit Boll and let him see with his own eyes the price I had exacted from the wily Mataram. His door stood ajar, and I stopped suddenly.

Boll was standing beside a bed upon which Kim Kim lay. Her arms reached up to him. Boll's hair was tousled as he stood close, looking down at her. Her hand found his and drew him to her again. Then her arms were about his neck. She kissed his eyes, lips, and face with all the stored energy of a voluptuous savage. I heard her murmuring, her words of broken English, Dutch, and Malay.

As Boll's arms encircled her, I turned away unnoticed, saying to myself, " So Boll has learned that honey has the colour of gold."

I moved to the deck and gazed upriver. All was still and quiet.

CULVER sent for Boll late in the afternoon.

We boarded the gleaming sister ship at dusk. Boll carried the log and all papers pertaining to the cash-trade enterprise, as well as Culver's picture wrapped in sailcloth, while Mr. Wulsin, fortified with whisky, followed us with a piece of soft wood in hand and a whittler's disposition in mind.

Robert Culver met us at the cabin door. His bushy brows and sideburns bristled above a stiff collar. And, as if he were attending a board meeting in Boston, he hid his stocky frame behind a conventional frock coat. He eyed Boll and me slowly, though he was unable to reconcile Mr. Wulsin's presence to what the evening offered.

Boll erased his dubious stare with, " Mr. Wulsin is a partner in the cash trade."

The four of us were hardly seated at the captain's table when Harriet entered. " We will get down to business," Culver said when she had taken her place.

" Yes," Boll replied. " I have the full report of our venture." He followed the figures in a big ledger, recounting expenses and profits in chronological order.

" More than one and a half million cash pieces have been put into circulation. The profit is well over three quarters of a million dollars, counting Pulo Besar's treasure."

The impressive financial report drew a flash of admiration out of Culver's eye, though he, as the rest of us, did not lose sight of a fact: many of the cash pieces would slowly work themselves to a Dutchman's bank. But Boll had been honest to the last penny, and Culver knew this. He had included such windfalls as the Ngada gold, the treasure of Pulo Besar, both of which he could have claimed as personal shares, free from division with even the crew.

" So," Boll said, " your share is half. The remainder is mine to divide with Flint, Wulsin, and the crew."

Culver wedged in captiously, " And how many cash pieces have you on hand ? "

" None," Boll replied.

" Good," Culver said. " We'll settle up and close the venture."

" But you agreed to a year," Boll reminded him, " which leaves us three months to go."

" I've made enough, Captain Boll. I'm getting out before the firm is further disgraced and the ship is confiscated."

" So you're breaking your bargain," Boll said, simulating dejection. He turned to Harriet. " You heard him say a year, didn't you ? "

" Yes," she admitted reluctantly. " But I'm afraid Mr. Culver has no choice in the matter, since the firm stands to lose what's left of its reputation."

Boll turned to Culver and snapped, " What happens to the *Gerrymander ?* "

Culver contained his triumph under a thoughtful mask as he said, " In the circumstances, Captain, I'm afraid I'll have to get along without your services."

Boll was patient ; he was forcing the play of Culver's hand down to the last card. He threw up another man for view again when he said quite sorrowfully, " This is all rather sudden, sir, considering the way I've made her pay. Now I had hopes of a better reward for my efforts on your behalf."

" I regret that your conduct won't allow it."

Boll smiled, and locked eyes with the unyielding Culver across the table. " You're a bit hasty, aren't you ? You forget that two can play the game. I mean the profits haven't been divided."

" I'm not that blind or stupid, Captain," Culver said with marked asperity. " The Dutch know where you've staked out your wealth, even to the warehouse in Soerabaja, where you hid the pirate's treasure. You'll divide all right, or you'll face more than a Dutch court."

He paused for effect and went on : " No, Captain Boll, you haven't a spar to cling to, unless it's a yardarm to hang from. You've run out of cash pieces at a time when they alone can save you. The Dutch won't prosecute you yet. Not until that single one over comes into the Javasche Bank to be redeemed for a guilder. And those cash pieces are trickling in, Captain Boll, slowly but surely."

Harriet frowned slowly as she studied Culver and his rising passion for Boll's end. She seemed surprised that it was that easy to rid the firm of Boll ; and I joined her with rising trepidation as I heard Culver reading the riot act in no uncertain terms.

Culver exulted, " Captain, I went to Batavia to get my ship and firm out of the Dutch claws your scheming brain got us into. I succeeded up to a point." Culver got to his feet, poured whisky without offering his guests any, and walked back to the table and stood. " They promised if I could show evidence of aid to the Dutch Government of the Indies in apprehending a slaveholder and swindler—you—I would be free to leave these waters with the *Gerrymander*, provided I agreed to keep her out of Dutch ports."

Boll chuckled, stretched himself, and poured drinks for Mr. Wulsin, himself, and me before saying, " Now that you've said your piece, I'll say mine."

" I'm not interested," Culver snapped.

" Oh yes, you are," Boll said, slumping lazily into place at the table. " You're very interested ; you just don't know it." He laughed, eyeing Mr. Wulsin surreptitiously. " Or else you're too

arrogant to admit it. You're a typical shipowner, tight-fisted, complaining, willing for a crew to maim itself or die in getting your ship through with a cargo. When it's done, you stiffly acknowledge the fact, afraid you'll bend your face or lose your pocket-book if you put any warmth into your smile. You're typical, Robert Culver, except for one very fine defect in your make-up. That I put to good use.

"I'll tell you a little secret," Boll continued. "I knew the Gerrymander Cash trade would fall sooner or later. I talked to bankers and financiers, all of whom agreed that it could not live with government opposition. It would have eventually ruined the Dutch money standard. The Dutch found that out a little late for their own good.

"Only you and I and the company stand to profit, Mr. Culver." He paused. "And if we can accomplish in nine months what I thought would require a year, so much the better. Aye. So much the better for me."

"I don't follow you," Culver snapped.

"It's very simple." Boll smiled. "You had something I wanted, something you hated. And I heard you curse the *Gerrymander*. You said you'd make her pay, and pay. Well, I was the man to make her pay. You were greedy, and I knew it. Now your own hate and greed have caught up with you. I played for that when I started the cash. Now it's here."

"What are you talking about?" Culver asked.

"Listen. You're involved, Robert Culver. The moment I get a receipt for your share of the profits, you're involved with the Dutch. No matter what sort of deal you made with them, they can't take me and let you go. You've got something there to think about.

"You can't take half the profits without taking half the results."

Boll allowed him a moment of cogitation before saying mildly, "Now if I were in your position, I'd think that over in a hurry—I'd even consider selling the *Gerrymander*."

I leaned forward with that, my expression of slow, deep surprise the same as Culver's, Harriet's, and old man Wulsin's. Boll held our eyes. He was tossing his coins, calling for his winds, and I felt the weight of what he suggested, as did Culver.

Culver asked, "What are you driving at?"

"Just an idea," Boll remarked. "Just an idea. You might escape any part of the cash-piece explosion when it comes, should you, instead of handing me a receipt for several hundred thousand dollars, hand me a clean bill of sale to the *Gerrymander*."

CULVER recovered at last and got to his feet. "What is this?" he boomed forth. He was angry now, very angry. Harriet was up on her feet also. Only old Wulsin, shaking his head dolefully as he whittled on, seemed unperturbed.

Answered Boll, "Merely an honest captain trying to buy a ship when he could just as easily get it for nothing."

"I won't be forced into a sale," Culver retorted.

Harriet was angry. She turned to Boll and said, "You can't get away with it, not if I have to—"

"Harriet!" I said, moving to her side. As she faced me, I said in low tone, "Let them alone. If Boll wins, I think I can win over him." She studied me for some time before squeezing my hand and resuming her seat in silence.

When I turned away from her, Culver was looking at me. "Mr. Flint," he said in no uncertain terms, "you're as guilty as Captain Boll. And I won't forget that."

"Guilty?" I smiled. "Of what—except winning Harriet?"

Boll sat smiling at Culver. "It's nothing, Lord Culver," he replied, "to what you're going to hear. But where's that pat hand you dealt a moment ago?" He grew suddenly serious. "That, Mr. Culver, is what I want. The *Gerrymander* in exchange for my share of earnings in the cash trade."

"And I, Captain Boll, will see you in hell first!"

"Very well," said Boll, rising. "We'll divide the gain tonight. It so happens Pulo Besar's treasure is aboard the *Gerrymander* instead of in the warehouse in Soerabaja. So we'll divide evenly, and you'll sign the receipt I write out. The facts in the case will make you as guilty as I." Boll smiled.

"I refuse to sign such," Culver snapped.

"Oh, you'll sign, all right," Boll replied, "or else you'll forfeit your share of the wealth, as well as find yourself the laughing-stock of Boston. It will be quieter my way."

Culver knew what Boll meant. So did Harriet and I. Boll placed gain above shallow enjoyment, however, as he saw Culver losing his ship, either way he turned: to the Dutch or to him. He was taking no chances in this game. He got up as if to pour himself another drink. Instead, he feigned interest in Mr. Wulsin, saying, "What's that you've whittled out, bosun?"

Mr. Wulsin started. "Oh! Just a little model of an object I've sailed with for several years." He held it up for all eyes to see, smiling proudly through his yellow beard as he eyed his handiwork.

Harriet gasped, "The figurehead!" Culver leaned forward slowly and stared as if he were void of any expression for the eternity of packed seconds; only then did the full significance of Mr. Wulsin's words join with that hellish image of the *Gerrymander*'s figurehead to flood his face with murderous intent. He arose slowly, gripping the arms of his chair with his hands.

"You! Who are you?" he asked, as if he feared the answer.

Boll answered, smiling, "Why, he's just the old bosun who's worked aboard Culver's *Gerrymander* for three years." He turned to the old man. "Aren't you, Mr. Wulsin?"

"Aye, sir," came the droll reply.

"He played his part in our cash trade also. He, sir, was our mintman—he struck the Gerrymander Cash." He turned another question to our bosun. "What was your name before you picked up the odd name of Wulsin?"

"Teale, sir—Augustus Teale."

I opened my mouth to voice my amazement, though I simply sat there as dumbfounded as Robert Culver. I had not been prepared

for that revelation, and I stared at the useless old bosun with unbelieving eyes, even as I realized that Boll seldom joked. Only Boll seemed pleased. The rest of us, including the old figurehead carver, were hanging on to the tail end of a threatening drama.

Boll spoke: "Mr. Flint, you've often asked why I carried an old sot along as bosun all these years. Well, the reason is simply this. Mr. Wulsin, or Mr. Teale, is here to tell Mr. Culver why the figurehead turned out like it did."

"Another drink, sir. Aye," said the bosun. "I'm a wee bit nervous." He was soon talking. He told of De Loach commissioning him to do Mr. Culver's likeness, of the argument with his wife over the advance payment, and of his inability to execute the piece after she had struck him with a mallet. He talked on, saying at last, "Mr. De Loach was innocent." Tears streamed down his face—a drunkard's tears. "Aye, he was innocent. By God and St. Ebenezer, he was!"

Boll smiled. He had come well prepared to deal with Culver. He had overlooked little. The last revelation served him as well as the first, in that he was able to deal out truth to destroy the cancerous germ that sustained Culver's hate of ship and De Loach.

As Culver said, "I don't believe it," I wondered why Boll had saved this trick.

"So you don't believe it," Boll said. "Boston will, Mr. Culver." Then he asked, "Now do we trade my way?"

Culver brought himself up sharply, and his eyes sent concurrent flashes of malice and challenge at Boll. Then he seemed to stare at or through the *Aladdin*'s bulkheads at future headlines of Boston newspapers. He said at last:

"It seems I'm licked. I'll give you my decision in the morning." When Boll said there was little use in prolonging the agony, Culver replied, "Perhaps I'm not licked yet."

Boll got to his feet lazily, grinned, and proceeded to study all of us before ripping the covering of sailcloth from Culver's portrait. He took the old carver's knife and cut Culver's picture neatly out of its frame, swung the empty square over his shoulder, and said to the astonished man who had sat for the portrait:

"Now there's a promise fulfilled."

It was indeed, I realized, as he strode arrogantly to the door.

I WAS up with the spectacular dawn; the indigo mantle still lay over the river, Balinese village, and palms.

The hands were busy with the morning washdown of decks. Said a sailor, "A boat from the *Aladdin*, sir." I turned to see Harriet and two oarsmen.

She waved as she drew near. "Closer," she said. "Come aboard, Mr. Flint." I got into the boat with her and returned her escort. Then I pulled for the lagoon.

"Any news?" I asked casually.

"Yes. But first, let me hear your plan."

I told her all, slowly, adding, "The *Nautch Girl* should now be

on her way to Little Fortune Island."

"So Captain Boll has his eye on Little Fortune Island also. It won't be easy for you to control that balance of power."

She looked serious. "It so happens that Mr. Culver called Captain Cott into conference last night after you departed. Does that suggest anything to you? No? Well, Tom, has it ever occurred to you that Mr. Culver, if he had those cash pieces at Little Fortune, could improve his position with the Dutch Government so much that he might save the ship and the firm and thereby score a victory over Captain Boll?"

I forgot the oars as I leaned forward in amazement.

"And now, Tom, suppose you look at the *Aladdin*. She's getting ready for Little Fortune Island, too. Mr. Culver is just waiting for the noon wind."

I looked back at the *Gerrymander*, thrusting away the dread feeling that was taking possession of me.

"It promises to be a good race," I admitted. "I wish you could go with us." Harriet smiled out over the lagoon. Then she said it:

"I *am going* with you, Tom."

LATER in the morning, I said to Boll, "The *Aladdin* is going to Little Fortune Island also, sir."

"I'm not too surprised, Mr. Flint. Mr. Cott has a long memory." He grinned, and eyed the ship downstream.

Harriet and Aunt Emily came aboard before noon with their baggage. Aunt Emily frowned at me over her glasses as I helped her up the gangway. "Mr. Flint, you're causing all sorts of trouble," she scolded. "I doubt if Robert will associate with us after we travel on this ship. But—youth must be served."

Harriet was soon standing before her portrait in Boll's cabin. I walked to her side and said, "That girl kept me company on our easting down. I fell in love with her then." Harriet glanced from the portrait to me, her smiling eyes questioning my sincerity. "It's the truth," I said.

Aunt Emily frowned at the picture. She was about to say something when I heard the cry from deck: "All hands on deck." It was followed by the entry of Chess.

"The *Aladdin* is making for the sea, sir!" he said.

On deck, I saw the *Aladdin* shaking out her sails, her hook dripping as she eased away in a southerly wind that wasn't running true to form. Ahead of us, and blocking our run for the sea, she had to get under way first. The wind which favoured her was ours, also.

I was soon aft, glancing up at the running gear. Said Boll, grinning, "Get ready to drive hell out of ship and crew, Mr. Flint. There's more than Mr. Cott aboard the *Aladdin*."

Soon I heard Boll calling for sail in lively manner. He ordered men to the rigging and to the halyard winches, barking orders right and left. The wind blew in aft and then from over the port-quarter. It would hold there, it seemed, and we tacked accordingly, quivering gently forward under topgallants and royals set for the wind.

The wind pennant stood out stiffly, pointing to the starboard bow, a good omen for a run up to the steady easterlies, or the hellish west monsoon already overdue. The watch, up to its ears in work, and listening for eight bells and noon, was surprised when Boll ordered the below watch out to unlimber our roaring-forties canvas.

The lookout advised a spur reef ahead, and good fathoms. Port the helm it was, and easy as you go for the shoal; and then lively, lively, with sheets for a twist in the slow wake of the *Aladdin*.

We were off on what promised to be a great race.

BOLL did not leave the deck that night; he stood in silence, forecasting the voyage, the thousand-mile race, taking into consideration the sails and running gear, the lines, ages, and health of both ships, the weather, and, all-important the daring of the two masters.

The crew was excited over the prospect of a race. The lookout whistled softly. Kim Kim, with Harriet on the poop, laughed gaily as she repeated words both alien and fascinating to her: "Man. Man. Me. You. Him. Pretty." The over-all picture seemed to predict a sane voyage. I wondered—until I saw Boll tossing coins into the sea as he invoked the devil up out of it in a dead level tone of voice. He was praying for a real wind.

The night wore itself out.

Sapoedi Strait moved hazily towards us with the change of the daylight watch. The lookout announced land on the port bow at two bells, and the elements sighed, panted a last breath, and left us hanging in the calm. We had not sighted the *Aladdin* that morning.

A couple of hours later the trade blew in, weak; we put every stitch of canvas on her and moved sluggishly ahead, only to meet with backing winds and gusts out of the west and north-west. But we heard the lookout's cheer: "Sail ho! Square-rigger ahead!" We had manœuvred up to within a mile of her when the wind came in from the north-west straight over the bowsprit. We could do nothing but tack, and the *Aladdin*, over our weather bow, was beating into the head wind with less success than we.

Boll was in his element; his eyes, calm and steady as his voice, could not wholly mask a sailing master's love of a race.

We split tacks, slowly gaining on Culver's ship, as Mr. Cott pinched her, or sailed too close to the wind. She had her royals furled and her courses fast; she laboured without any staysails flying. Boll carried all plain sails on the *Gerrymander*, and with the mathematical precision of a wizard, he fought to beat through the strait. We were almost caught aback in a gust, but we were ready to turn about. We did, though the *Aladdin* lost her head and missed stays, and she put us forward of her when Mr. Cott was forced to wear his ship around far behind us. We had made a fair wind of it.

Through the glass I saw Culver pacing the deck. He took over then, and the *Aladdin* let fly her kites and loosed her royals to the wind. It was now a duel between Boll and Culver. The first brush of it lasted all day, with both ships trying to get through the strait to the Java Zee. Culver was drawing up on us slowly at nightfall,

and with the wind drawing back and freshening out of the east, both ships ran the strait under a crowd of sail.

I saw several schooners that day, and I searched for their names. Not one of them was the Rajah's *Nautch Girl.*

With the sickly moon later that night, we made out the foreyard of the *Aladdin* behind us. With the first morning watch, she still sat hull under horizon, her sails misty in the weak moonlight.

We had covered almost one-third of the distance, and still neither ship had gained an advantage. But the real race lay ahead.

HARRIET invited me to breakfast with her that morning. She wore a simple dress of white. A wisp of hair curled at her forehead, and I toyed with it, laughing as it sprang back into place.

" Has our chief mate nothing more to do than play with a ship's kitten ? " she asked, pouring coffee.

I grinned, sipped the brew, and exclaimed, " Little Ahab didn't make this coffee ! "

" No, sailor. And you might as well develop a liking for it. Have you seen the Rajah's schooner yet ? "

" Harriet, you know, a woman as pretty as you should never bother with problems. However, I hope you fried my egg. Good. As to your question, I haven't seen the *Nautch Girl.* And I hope I don't, until she stands off Little Fortune flying a white pennant under the Dutch flag—the signal that the cash pieces are ours."

Kim Kim entered. She wore her favourite cloth fashioned into a brief sarong. Aunt Emily would have called it scandalous. I was beginning to wonder if her daring exposure of waist, limbs, and bosom was due entirely to artlessness and setting. By all standards, she was the naïve island girl. And yet she was woman. As I glanced at a gold pin at the divide of her breast, I realized that she had purposely used it to hold the silk as low as possible.

Harriet studied her also and I placed her in Kim Kim's dress in my mind's eye. The picture I saw was pleasing.

Kim Kim admired the pearl buttons and the lace trim of Harriet's dress. " Pret-ty," she said. Then she pointed to me. " Him ? Him ?" Excited, she added, " Him—you—man ? "

Harriet laughed and humoured her. " Yes. Him mine."

As she took her place at the table, Boll entered. He eyed us, removing his cap and oilskins, and took a seat next to Harriet.

" Culver's driving hard," he said, looking at Harriet. He grinned, and said, " Mr. Flint, you're getting a prize here."

Harriet said, laughing, " I'm not so sure."

Kim Kim's eyes leaped curiously from Boll to Harriet, and back again helplessly. The conversation was but a jumble of words to her.

" And ask her some day, Mr. Flint, how we met." He took Harriet's hand in his. " And you didn't forget me, did you, Miss Adams ? It was really you who placed me in command of this ship, wasn't it ? "

Kim Kim saw only Boll holding Harriet's hand. Her spontaneity gone, she seemed both childishly sullen and jealously alert. Used to Boll's ways, I thought nothing of his play ; but Kim Kim, whom I had

seen pull Boll down to her lips in passion, viewed a threat.

Boll said, " Now let me tell you something : if it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't have offered Lord Culver any part of my shares for this ship, I'd have taken her."

" Thanks, Captain Boll." She flashed a smile my way.

" You're welcome." He leaned closer. " Will you wish me luck ? "

Before Harriet could answer, Kim Kim was up. She put herself between Boll and Harriet and said fiercely, " Him—my man ! "

Harriet looked up at her, smiling. Her hand caught Kim Kim's as she said, " Yes, Kim Kim. Him your man."

Boll merely looked on. I was glad when he took Kim Kim's other hand. Her face gradually assumed a smile.

" Him—Tom—you man." She seemed satisfied, and suddenly pleased that she possessed something in common with her occidental sister : love placed them on equal footing.

ON deck later, I saw the clouds astern had thickened ; and the *Aladdin*'s sails, now creeping up on us, were silhouetted in grey against the advancing storm.

The glass was falling. It had dropped from 30 to 29.40.

Our royals were set and pulling. Behind, I saw the *Aladdin*'s royals come in. Soon her trim down to topsails advised that she expected big weather. I decided to hold to topgallants.

The wind bore down on us just as the cloud dumped its ballast atop the *Aladdin.* She paused, then staggered, leaned forward and to the sides, spinning her mastheads about in vicious arcs. Then the sea leaped up at her from behind. Moments later the same weather paid call on the waiting *Gerrymander.*

Harriet, in oilskins, stood with me when it struck. The leaping seas and the scream of the wind in the rigging evoked excited pleasure in her face. There was wind for all, enough to warrant the mizzen relieved of all sail. It blew out of a moderate gale into fresh gale in a matter of minutes.

We clipped off fifteen knots all that day, our world a mass of spray, rain aslant, and seas on deck. The sea growled up behind us, ran the length of the ship, and tossed at us from port and starboard.

That evening Boll called for sail that was better left furled. He ordered the course altered a point to the south, hoping to trick Culver, who, when we had last seen his ship, was holding up for a safe free run around the Java Bulge. The wind held aft, and we scudded on.

Before morning the wind blew into a whole gale, and the life lines were up on deck. But Boll, dripping like the sails, stood grinning. " We'll take in no sail, Mr. Flint."

It remained for the gale to trim sail for us—it obliged by carrying away a main-topsail. To counteract this loss, we were forced to slow her. The great foresail was reefed and she was reined down at last.

At seven o'clock the helmsman was about to sound six bells. Then all of a sudden the bell clanged like a demon gone out of its head ; a cry went up, and all eyes followed a pointing finger. I shall never forget that sight :

The *Aladdin* had emerged from that pall of mist, half her length behind it, her bowsprit raking unbelievably at our stern. She was driving head on, advancing inch by inch until her jib boom seemed sure to tangle with our spanker, or crack over our stern rail with the next trough. And what held that boom off, scant inches away from severe tophamper loss to the following ship, I shall never know.

She was saved by our bell and not by her drowsy lookout. She cried and moaned as her helmsman jerked her off. But on she came, obliquely off our starboard, gaining an inch a minute, and holding close to us, too close, not fifty feet away, and tearing through at a clip that caused even Boll to voice surprise.

Boll ordered sail crowded on the *Gerrymander*, one after another, and still the *Aladdin* rocked, tossed, and split the sea with her bobbing cutwater until she sailed even with us. We could scan her deck by that time, and we felt the spirit of the old school of mariners when we saw Culver, water running down his face and sopping Boston business suit, standing on the poop and shouting orders at the top of his voice. Mr. Cott ran about like the second aboard, while the roaring voice of Culver reached our ears with :

" Set t'gallants'ls, and look alive ! Lively there ! "

Then he walked to the rail, faced Boll and me, his wet fingers raking the water off his uncovered head before separating wet collar from wet neck. Cupping his hands, he cried out :

" Where's your sails, Captain Boll ? " He laughed. " By God and a purple dolphin, I'll send you oars when I reach the strait ! "

She seared close to us, her colours snapping forward. She dipped her ensign and we returned the courtesy. The *Aladdin* moved obliquely off from us, though still ahead, with Culver far aft and laughing at us.

SAIL after sail was run up. We tried for the Striker's maximum speed. It was neck and neck all that day, with backing winds, with Culver pulling away from us a point to the north as we approached the northward thrust of the Java shore. Boll chuckled, holding down in that wet close horizon to west-north, bringing up a threat of the northernmost projection of Java ahead. Late in the afternoon, when the storm showed signs of blowing itself out, the *Aladdin* lay over our starboard quarter, head over horizon.

Then I saw it, another set of sails ahead of us. Before darkness fell over ships and sea I made her out through the glass. My hopes sank as I sounded her name :

" The *Nautch Girl.*"

I told Harriet what I had seen. She held my eyes for some time before asking if I knew of some way to slow Boll.

" Aye ! " I exclaimed. " But who will hold Culver ? " There was no answer. " By the Lord, he's a better seaman than I thought, Harriet ! Even Boll is surprised."

We consulted the chart and read : *Sedulang Reefs, 6° 07′ S., 107° 35′ E., outermost reef four miles from coast ; dangerous, covered by two fathoms of water. At nine fathoms vessels will then be two miles off the reefs.*

I called the leadsman, and Boll smiled. "The southern danger is worth the few miles we'll gain on Culver." He took it, and we held to it until the leadsman chanted out ten fathoms; only then did Boll order the ship a point to the north. Even then we scraped at midnight, causing a round of shudders and stomachs leaping up for throats. But the two and a half miles saved at the risk of ship and lives put us into Soenda Strait ahead of Culver, who had circled far to the north.

Boll was Boll, and there was no end to his luck.

The *Gerrymander*, leading at sunrise of the next day by virtue of temerity, slipped into the south-west set of the current of Soenda Strait for a morning of calms and variable winds.

Boll had slept little since Mataram and he had departed from the deck only after freezing the halyards. He had almost worn out the crew and himself, though he stood fresh in strong contrast to the weary hands on the main deck.

All that night I watched in every direction, hoping to see the *Nautch Girl* slipping by west of us. But I did not see the schooner.

The east wind did not come, though the westerly backed down as if the devil stroked its mane. The current obeyed the breath of the monsoon and we beat slowly westward, while Culver, miles south of us, began working to the south-west. With daylight, the *Aladdin* was all but royals under in her reach for southing.

There we were, off Java Head, not more than seventy-five miles from Little Fortune, and yet long hours away from our goal. Here was one of the disadvantages of sail: sometimes you sail due north for southing and touch port coming in from the west or east.

To Boll—he had an anxious look on his face—I said, "If we don't make southing, Culver will sweep into the bay from the west by midnight."

"I am thinking of southing and more," he replied, ordering me to put her starboard tacks aboard and reach for southing.

We sailed in sight of each other all that day, the *Gerrymander* pulling ahead and more to westward, while Culver was forced farther south to attain less westing. By nightfall Culver was out of sight.

The wind, however, backed down and hauled in from the south-west. Then it puffed out, leaving us in a calm. The wind did not die to the south of us, since only a good wind could have brought the *Aladdin* roaring up close to us.

Boll cursed.

With the make of the wind out of the west-south-west, Culver sat trimmed for it. Forced to haul the yard ourselves, we saw him take that quartering wind, his port tacks set, and leap towards us.

We put the ship on the port tack in record time. Boll amazed me with his order then: "Close in ahead of Culver on the leeward side."

"Helm up!" The *Gerrymander* and the *Aladdin* converged slightly, gradually closing in. It is difficult to imagine two captains allowing such risk of collision, though the bows were drawing in to where they would soon meet. They were no more than fifty yards apart when Boll cried, "Weather ship keep out!"

Boll voiced a rule of the stream applying to two ships close-hauled

on the same tack. There was confusion aboard the *Aladdin*, and yet there was no action which should set her off her course. Soon, from the sister ship, Culver's voice rang out:

"Ahoy! We're holding our course and speed!"

"So are we!" Boll cried. He turned to me and said, "I never thought I'd have to win a race this way." To the helmsman he said, "Put her head across the *Aladdin*'s course. Easy. Easy as you go."

In the black of night our red running light was drawing ahead of Culver's green. We were within fifty feet of the *Aladdin*, and still closing in. If confusion reigned aboard the *Aladdin*, so did our disciplined crew gape and utter protests. Our poop was even with the other's bow, and still no more than fifty feet held us apart. The *Aladdin*'s jib boom was pointing then straight at our foremast, and with the distance closing in fast. I saw Boll's strategy:

He was forcing Culver into one of two measures to protect his ship: too close to heave to with sails set, he could only cut all sheets and let fly the driving sails, or come on and risk his bowsprit, and the tophamper with it. There was no chance to run her off then, as Culver hurried his decision. But before he ordered the sheets cut, Mr. Cott had started cutting away.

Boll chuckled. "I knew Mr. Cott would beat him there."

The ship behind us lay helpless. She could not repair her sheets soon enough to take her place as a contender. As we moved away, Boll drew the first round of applause from the crew.

Though he had resorted to extreme measures in winning the race, not one of the crew could deny him the true appellation he had earned over the years—the Striker.

WE left the *Aladdin* there as we straightened her and hauled on north by west, rocking under the press of canvas like an express to the Bay of Balimbing. Far behind us, the *Aladdin*'s red light winked off and on with the motion of the wave tops.

We anchored off Little Fortune in the night. As the island danced into my eyes at dawn, I searched for a sign of the Rajah's *Nautch Girl*.

It was not there.

Little Fortune Island was low, wooded, and less than a mile long; it burned green and palm-fringed in the sun.

As we worked up to the north-east anchorage, our leadsman droned out the fathoms, "Ten, nine and a half!"

Boll looked pleased. "In seven fathoms at anchorage. So who wins, Mr. Flint?" He laughed.

I said nothing as I screwed my face into a thin, tight mask and waited, wishing for long eyes to search the waters on the island's other side for the Rajah's schooner.

Boll moved forward, yelling, "Careful where the hook falls!"

I remembered, as if it had been only yesterday, our first and only visit here. We had slipped into the Bay of Balimbing with the night wind abeam, Boll at the wheel, a frustrated group of mutineers on the main deck. I remembered how the anchor had no sooner

dropped than the crew, seeking some subtle vengeance, dumped the box of cash pieces overboard. And now—that same box in Boll's possession meant that he would own the *Gerrymander* at his own terms ; that Boll could stretch the yellow pieces over the Indies and thereby stave off ruin for a time. The same box, in Culver's hands, meant that Culver could dump that extra, all-important cash pieces over Boll's guarantee into the hands of the Dutch, thereby finishing Boll once and for all.

The *Gerrymander* eased to a gentle stop, and the anchor slipped with a rattle of chain and a splash.

The *Gerrymander* squatted, panting almost after her great run. She responded to a strong hand, did that lady.

Boll searched the horizon for the *Aladdin,* grinned at the empty line where earth was sewn to sky. The wind, from the south-east, was holding Culver back. Boll ordered a boat over the side, and cables, hooks, and a windlass made ready. He was sure of finding that box of cash pieces, while I stood there, afraid that he might do just that. I debated upon the advisability of letting Boll go down and find out if the box lay there.

" Sir," I said to Boll, " hadn't you better check the other shore—for a Dutch gunboat ? " His reply was a laugh, followed by, " Mr. Flint, you remind me of Mr. Cott. This is no time to cut sheets."

" No," I reflected, " this is no time to cut sheets." My time was up, and I resorted to bluff as I said : " There's nothing down there, sir."

He straightened up and eyed me. " No ? "

" No."

" You're tardy with your information, Mr. Flint." He stood with hands on hips as he studied me intently. " Why, if this is not some foolish joke ? "

" Go on and find out," I bluffed. He advanced slowly, trying to put the finger of his mind on what was happening here.

The crew to a man, except the lookout, stared inanely ; and the man at the masthead cried out : " Schooner coming in from around the island ! "

" Name her colours," I ordered, hope leaping up inside me.

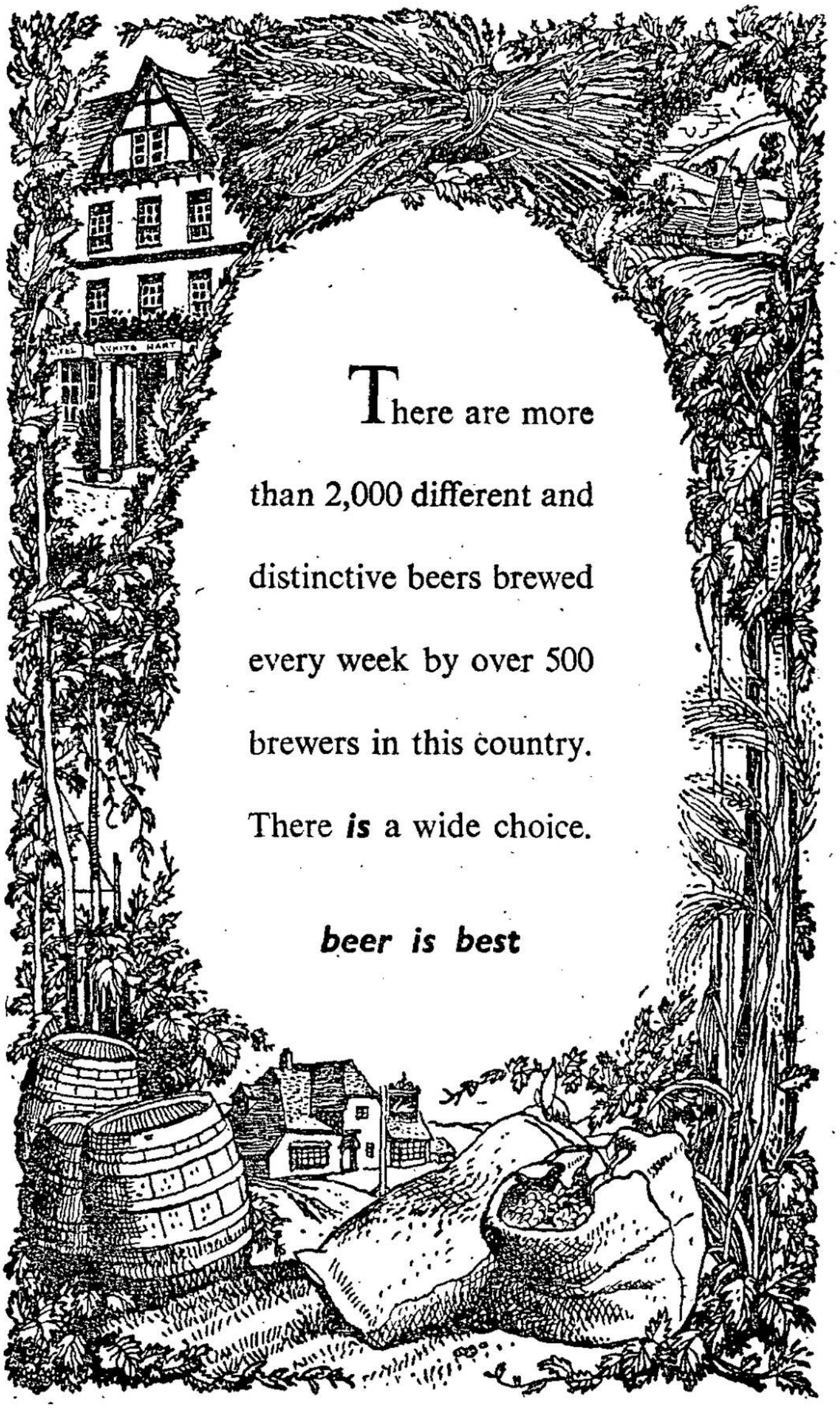
" Dutch, sir. She's flying a white pennant under the flag."

I faced Boll. " I repeat, there's nothing down there. That schooner carries the cash pieces, sir—for Tom Flint."

Boll faced me, his face as calm as before. He said at last, " I'll look first. Then, if you're right, maybe we'd better go below and talk this over, Mr. Flint."

I WENT to Boll's cabin after making sure the Rajah's schooner would stand by, well armed. Boll awaited me, anxious, though he masked his alert mind with the usual calm so typical of the Striker.

I took my place at the table and accepted the drink he proffered. " We've spliced the main brace many a time, Mr. Flint," he said affably. " We'll do it again." We drank together before he asked, " What's this all about ? "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"Let's start at the beginning," I said. Thereupon I told him of my desire to own the *Gerrymander*, of my plans during the Kim Kim hearing, of my failure there, to my deal with the Rajah. He listened without any change of expression other than that of a rapid absorption. I omitted De Loach's part in the affair as well as Harriet's position in De Loach and Company.

My story came to an abrupt end with, "That's why I wanted you to beat Culver."

Boll smiled. He had not once removed his slitted eyes from my face. "So you want the ship. Somebody else is in this, Mr. Flint. Who?"

"I said *I* wanted the *Gerrymander*, didn't I?"

"Now that," he said slowly, "is all very interesting. But it doesn't fit together, Mr. Flint. You are about to marry the biggest stockholder in the firm. And yet," he said slowly, "you're trying to steal her best-paying ship. It doesn't make sense."

"Maybe I'm trying to save it for her."

"And Culver?" he drove back at me.

"No," I answered stoutly. "I'm sorry I can't reveal more just now. Only Harriet can do that."

"Mr. Flint, you'd better send for her. I'm sure you realize that I am in an excellent position to destroy all you've done. I can trade with Culver where you can't; and if I so desire, I can let him keep the *Gerrymander*."

"In that case," I said, "I might be forced to work with Culver and the Dutch. As you know, a box of cash pieces could hardly fail to whet a Dutch mind into a trading proposition."

Boll was quick with a truth: "But you, tied to somebody else, could hardly work with Culver. No, Mr. Flint, you could not. So one fact remains: Captain John Boll isn't licked."

"I came here, sir, aware that you could reverse your position with Culver if you so desired. And I would not have declared myself had I been minus the lever with which to guarantee your actions."

"It seems you don't know me, Mr. Flint."

"Sir," I said, "I may not know you, but I know this case. I'll give you this much to think about—you can't work with Culver and find yourself any better off than before you took his picture out of the frame. While I can take a lot of cash pieces to the Dutch, or dump them one by one into the sea."

Boll was up on his feet. "Now perhaps we'd better come to some terms, Mr. Flint. Sit down, and let us—" But just then we heard a cry from the deck: "*Aladdin!* Coming in fast!"

I RACED to the deck, Boll staring after me. The *Aladdin* was drawing close. She leaned to the wind a mile out, taking in her canvas as she came. Soon she sat close by, her anchor cable playing out. It was Culver who drew my attention. He was not the picture of the Culver I had seen last. He stood bare to the waist, his hard, ruddy face fierce under a battered sea cap. Harriet and Aunt Emily could hardly believe their eyes. He tossed a cigar over the rail and barked:

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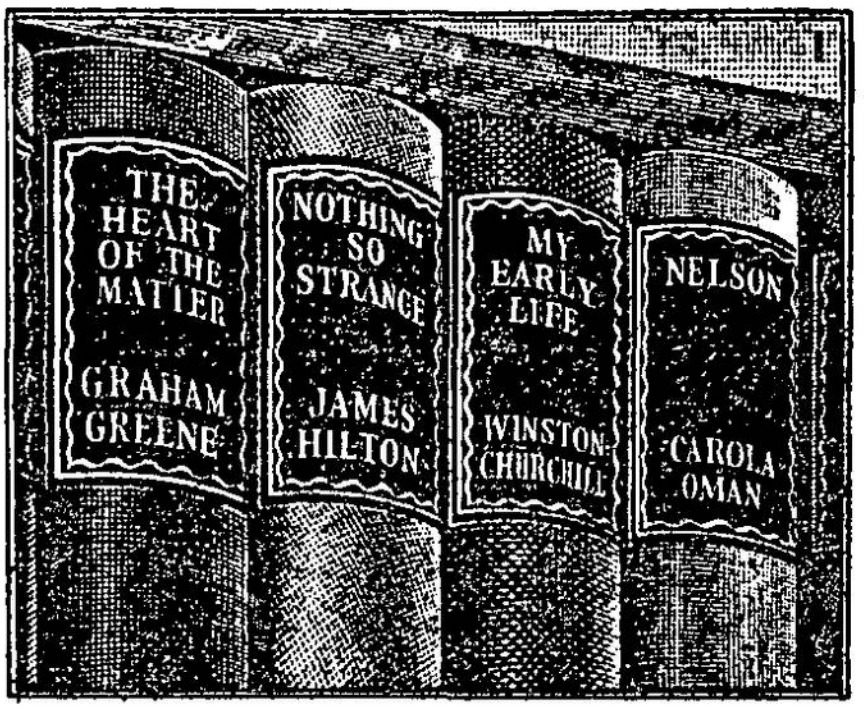

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BTI

" Where's Captain Boll ? "

" Below, sir—waiting for you."

" Where are the cash pieces ? " he demanded gruffly.

" That, sir, is a foolish question, since we arrived here first." He nodded then and asked about the schooner standing off a little distance from us. " She's got something to do with all this," I replied. " She flies a Dutch flag."

" Too bad she's not a gunboat," he wished aloud.

A tense, awkward silence hung over both ships.

" We'll be waiting for you in Captain Boll's cabin, sir," I said.

" I'll never set foot on that—that ship ! " His voice held the very quintessence of malice.

" Suit yourself." I spread my hands wide. Then I sounded the order to stand by and raise the anchor.

" Wait ! " Culver said equivocally. I did. He was soon crossing over, glaring at the ship he hated.

We moved directly to Boll's quarters. He sat there, the same lord and master, who, by his expression, seemed to say he could rise up and brush aside all obstacles before him at will. And I wasn't so sure that he would not do just that. He grinned enigmatically at me, then at Culver. I took a chair next to Harriet and waited for the crux.

Culver turned on Boll suddenly. He proceeded to voice his opinion in no uncertain terms of the other's racing tactics. Boll reminded him that the race had ended yesterday, that today was a new day, one he would long remember.

Boll was assuming the initiative, which suited me perfectly. It was necessary that Boll should uncover whatever he had in mind. He was not long in doing just that in his own inimitable style.

He said to Culver, " Sir, I was a bit rough with you in the race. My humble apologies. Now I have been thinking also, sir, that perhaps I was a bit hasty in my efforts to force you to turn the *Gerrymander* over to me. You've been a good partner. You took chances along with me."

I was not alone in assuming a tense expression. Harriet's face was sharpened with suspense, as was Aunt Emily's and Culver's.

Boll moved on, slowly, carefully : " Of course, there are risks ahead, sir. I refer to our joint guilt of a Dutch-trumped charge of fraud ahead of us. But we can weather that, I am sure."

He grinned at Culver, whose expression was slowly undergoing a change. Hope and doubt, another surge of both, showed in Culver's face. These were joined by open suspicion.

" How can we weather that charge ? " Culver asked.

Boll smiled. " We'll make them cut sheets, sir." His temerity here, a reminder of how he had won the race, provoked Culver into a sort of growling respect for the Striker's lack of unction.

He snapped, " Yes," in a semi-satisfied manner before asking, " How ? "

Boll replied, " A good sailor doesn't tack ahead of the weather." He left it there to stand in his favour as he went on : " We can make the *Gerrymander* pay."

" What are you driving at ? " said Culver.

" Just this," Boll said. " Instead of taking the ship, as I can do, I'll be satisfied to own her jointly with you—half and half, sir."

Harriet spoke up : " I'm not interested." I nudged her, frowning. I wanted Boll's hand to unfold completely before I had my say.

Culver weighed Boll's proposition as he asked, " What about the cash-trade profits—do you wish to buy a half interest in the ship with your share ? "

" No," Boll replied. " We'll split the profits."

Culver reddened perceptibly. " Why, this is not as good a proposition as your last one, in which you offered to relinquish your share for the ship ! "

" No "—Boll smiled—" not for the present, perhaps. But in time, yes." He paused, then said, " And in another way, Mr. Culver, it's a much better proposition than before."

" How ? " He eyed Boll sharply, as if he doubted the Striker's sanity. " In what way ? "

" Don't forget, sir, that we must face the Dutch in this together, no matter the outcome. You are no coward. Not the man who drove the *Aladdin*."

It was only then that I saw Boll's hole card : he was feeding Culver with rich servings of their collective invincibility in a bid for Culver's agreement on that one score. And with Culver's nod, those cash pieces I held as a threat over both Boll and Culver might become instantly worthless to De Loach and me. I started. Boll smiled my way, and then he drove hard at me as he said easily :

" Mr. Culver, on second thought, I'll even up the proposition—I'll turn over half of my net share of the cash-piece profits to you for a half interest in the ship."

I grinned angrily as I realized that Boll had shortened his offer at first in order to lengthen it at just the right moment.

Culver was weakening. It was time for me to step in.

" Mr. Culver," I said, " why don't you ask Captain Boll why he is less hoggish with you than at your last meeting ? You know that the Striker never makes concessions without good reasons."

" I've been weighing that point," he replied. Then he faced me, somewhat surprised. " Are you and Captain Boll at odds ? "

" Slightly," I replied, ahead of Boll, who said :

" Mr. Flint is working against both of us. And, sir, so will everyone until we unite and crush all opposition."

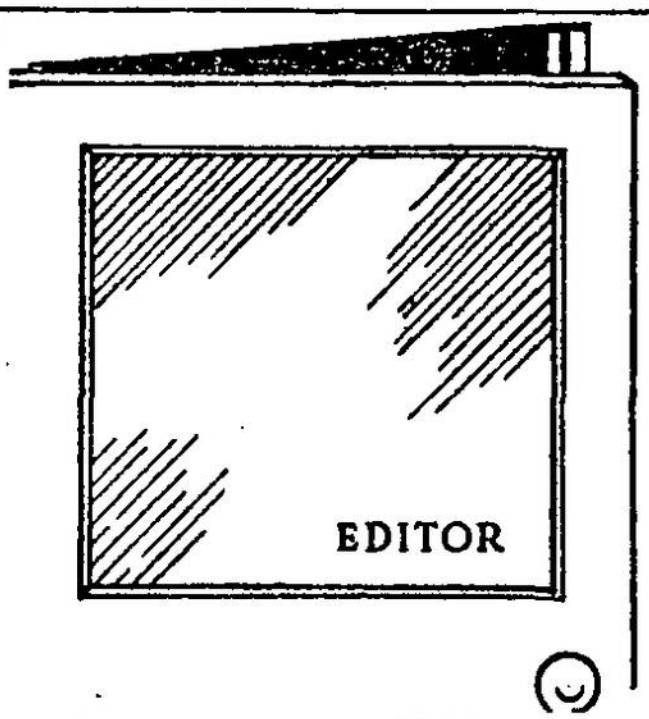
Said Culver, " And just what is your position, Mr. Flint ? "

" I own the box of cash pieces, sir."

" You ! " He was on his feet, staring from me to Boll.

Soon his face showed a little smile of satisfaction. He added malice to it when he faced Boll. " Captain Boll, I think I shall do business with Mr. Flint." He sat down and smiled ; he was quite pleased with the turn of events. " Mr. Flint," he said slowly, " allow me to compliment you. It was nice of you to think of Harriet in this case—and you may be sure I won't forget it."

" I don't think you will ever forget it," I said in a tone of voice that brought his eyes up sharply.



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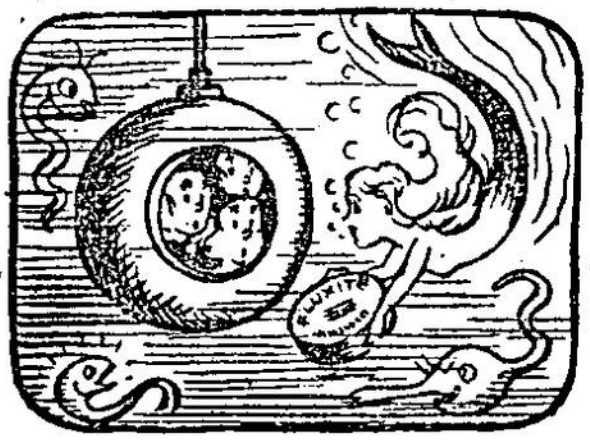

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Boll smiled. " Mr. Flint wants the ship also. I'll remind you again of the value of our uniting ourselves, sir."

" Flint—he wants the ship ! " Culver voiced surprise.

I said, " Mr. Culver, Harriet and I want a little harmony to come out of this meeting. If either you or Boll owned that box of cash pieces, you know what the result would be. But it so happens I own them, and I want both of you to make a few concessions. I am prepared to take the case, cash pieces and all, to the Dutch, in whose waters we are anchored. They will, I am sure, be pleased to deal with the situation."

Culver scoffed, " You can't take the ship to the Dutch without Captain Boll's consent."

I saw him moving to Boll's reasoning then. " No ? " I replied. " I think I can. You see, the members of the crew could be brought face to face with the facts in a hurry. Under Boll, they face delay when they'd like to go home. Under you, they would be blackballed. They could not find berths on any ship. So I can take over here when I please. I could also get the crew to enter a petition for Boll's removal."

" That would suit me," Culver said quickly.

" Now would it ? " I smiled. " Let's consider the circumstances. There's the cash-piece trade, a pirate's treasure aboard, and the possible fate of the ship herself in Dutch hands. If Boll is removed, then you alone are responsible when the Dutch get that one cash piece they want. I can almost guarantee any move I choose to make, since I, you must remember, control the box of cash pieces that brought us here."

I paused when Culver's frown deepened. He knew enough of the Dutch to realize the power of my threat. I added the final thrust in lazy manner : " Now if I were Captain Boll, I'd say, ' I can just see all this in the Boston papers '."

Culver glared at me. Boll rubbed the point of his nose as he considered the strength of my position.

" But I don't want to do any of those things."

" What do you want, then ? " said Culver.

" I want to see the shares divided. I want your promise to give Boll a clean start with another concern after all of us untangle him —and you—from the Dutch web."

Culver's bulging eyes possessed a naïve sort of shock that provoked laughter : he could not understand the meaning of selflessness any more than he could see himself submitting to any such reasoning.

To Boll I said, " You'll close out the Gerrymander Cash as best you can to the advantage of all, and swear never to cross Mr. Culver's path again."

Culver leaned forward. " But Captain Boll said you wanted the ship."

" Yes," I replied, " I was coming to that. There's an old feud that Mr. Teale caused. And since you know now that you've done Amos De Loach a great wrong, it is time for you to make amends."

" De Loach ! " Culver shouted. " Are you talking for De Loach?"

Boll said, "So you're working for De Loach? I might have known it." He faced Culver. "We'd better stick together."

"Can you? And can you win over me, Captain Boll?" I asked. "If so, how?" There was no answer. "I'm offering both of you the easy way out. And if you don't want it, remember I still own that box of cash pieces." I added firmly, "Which I'll use."

Culver paced back and forth. I heard his mutterings: "De Loach!" He faced me, moved on. "It's unthinkable." He spoke out then: "What do you mean by making amends?"

"I think De Loach and Company is prepared to take this ship off your hands—for the same price which Culver and Adams took over the *Cape Race*. Then we'll make a lady of her."

Culver was fast turning from red to purple in his anger. I brought him up for fresh estimates when I asked a question of Harriet: "Does De Loach and Company back that offer?"

"Harriet!" Culver boomed forth. "Are you—are you in any way hooked up with De Loach?"

"I am," she replied.

No word was spoken for long, long minutes, as we awaited the only decision Robert Culver could voice. It came at last: "You win, Mr. Flint."

BY sunset the wealth we carried was divided. Culver's share was taken to the *Aladdin*, while Boll ordered his share left in the forward hold. The crew of the *Gerrymander*, suddenly rich, fell to gambling. Chess, in the middle of it, caught my eye.

"That lad, Chester Duval. I've been thinking, Harriet. Could we use a boy of his age—as a sort of son?" Before she could answer, I walked down to the main deck and jerked him up roughly.

"Come with me, Chess." He gathered his share and followed. When I had him before Harriet, I said, "Chess, if you leave her side until I order it, I'll toss you to the sharks."

"Aye, sir." He grinned at Harriet as I signalled the *Nautch Girl* to move up with the box of cash pieces.

The rusty box was no sooner deposited on the deck than the Rajah himself, dressed in white satin, came aboard. "One last drink with the mighty Captain Boll, Mr. Flint," he said. We went to the captain's cabin, where Boll sat in deep study of a map.

He looked up, eyeing us in the same lordly manner of old before saying, "Sit down."

The Rajah of Mataram smiled craftily and said, pointing to the map, "Are you planning a voyage, Captain?"

"Aye. They say the pearl take in the French South Seas is enormous."

The Rajah's brows lifted. He glanced at Kim Kim, who sat on the floor fashioning a silken square into a headpiece, and remarked casually, "So you'll be leaving the Indies? It is just as well, since Pulo Besar himself awaits me at my palace. He arrived at the palace before you sailed. He sends this message to you, Captain, a very odd one: 'I'm glad you realized the Kim Kim mistake.' He said

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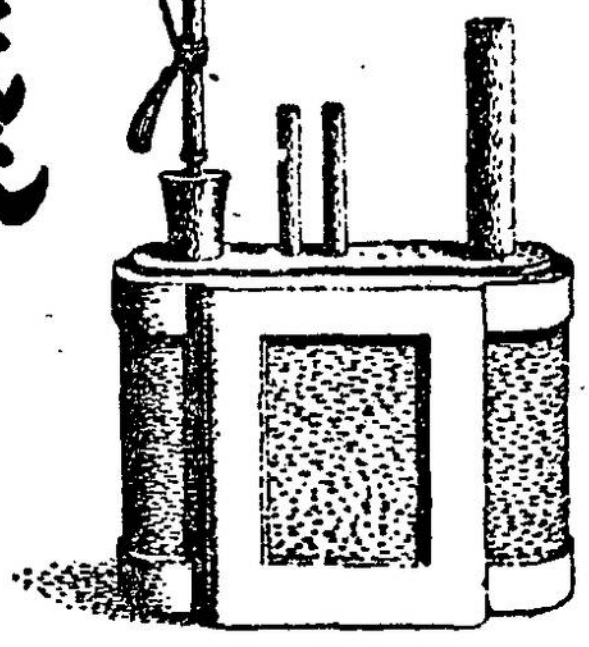

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to tell you that some saint called Eben-a-eezer said it."

"Tell him I said it wasn't a mistake," Boll said tetchily.

The Rajah bowed, a mocking smile playing on his face. Then his eyes fell on Kim Kim hungrily as he said, "Captain, I am prepared to make a final bid for your dancing girl—twenty thousand guilders!"

Boll did not hesitate as he replied, "Kim Kim is not for sale at any price, Your Highness."

THE Rajah had no sooner bowed at the door than a cry sounded from the deck. I heard the word, "Fire!" and raced out of the cabin, not knowing whether we had been attacked or set afire. When I reached the open, I saw smoke pouring out of the sail locker just under the poop. A tongue of flame leaped out on deck.

The crew came to life in a hurry. Cries and running feet, orders from all directions, and buckets over the sides told a story of a sailor's nightmare—a burning ship. I looked up and saw Harriet, her mouth open. Moving towards her was Culver, while running up from the other side were Boll and the Rajah.

How had the fire started? No one seemed to know. I studied Culver for a fleeting second and then shelved the puzzle.

The flames were fast making headway. Within short minutes the fire was eating into the superstructure and licking at the holds with maniacal fury.

The fire seemed to laugh at mere mortals with buckets. It darted out at the chain of water carriers, licking up the outer stanchions like a devil on the loose. The quarter-deck was soon untenable, and the men of both ships were driven from between decks, first by smoke, and later by the crashing floor. There was no chance of getting the few drums of oil nestled there, unless we chopped through. This we effected, reaching all but one.

I managed to work my way into the captain's quarters for a valuable object. I groped through the smoke, crawling along the hot carpet for air safe to breathe. As I took Harriet's picture down, the flames broke through and the skylight above caved, showering me with glass and live coals. I thought of the thousands of dollars in the safe in the corner as I crawled reluctantly to the opening. The safe was open: Boll had not forgotten his money! As I looked back inside for the last time, the whole place burst into flames.

Boll ordered Mr. Cott to pull his ship some distance away, to take Harriet, Aunt Emily, and Kim Kim with him. The Striker! It was an apt name for Boll once again. He was everywhere, clipping off orders and tearing in where others held back.

"Tom," he said, working at my side, "if Culver did this, I hope he roasts in hell." Then I heard him say, "She's the greatest ship that ever sat in the water."

In another moment he moved down through a hatch.

"If Culver did this." I could not shake those words as Culver's promise leaped into mind: "She's going to pay, and pay, until I bleed her of every cent she'll earn—until I rob her of self-respect. Then I'll carry her down as a scoundrel degrades a virtuous woman.

And only I know her fate in the end ! " As I thought of the insurance and all, I saw Culver in the rôle of an evil perfectionist.

I wondered even as I fought the sweeping blaze. I soon forgot Culver, however : *our* ship was on fire ! The ship for which I had laboured with everything in me !

Suddenly I remembered Boll's share of the treasure : bales of gold-threaded batik, the cargoes of unique diversity, all wealth, and all down in that threatening crucible. Then I remembered that Boll was down there. A dozen men were sent after him, and all were driven out.

At last, as if he were the devil himself, the same man who had lifted his head above the deck in Makassar after Captain Steel's death appeared—Boll. " The ship's doomed, Mr. Flint," he said sorrowfully. Then the devil's face gave way to a mortal's.

" All right, men," I bellowed, " belay all ! " It was no use to fight on. The *Gerrymander* was doomed, a funeral pyre to accident, or to one man's hate. Culver ! Where was he ?

" Every man off ! " I cried. " You too, sir," I said to Boll. I had no sooner spoken than the deck amidships shuddered, rippled, and lifted, bursting open in places, accompanied with an awful roar, and another. Flames shot up from over the sides and through the deck. It was then every man for himself. I had forgotten the case oil below, and I remembered it too late. Trapped on all sides, I could only make a run for the rail, hoping to avoid a hole in the deck.

I saw the old bosun and I heard his scream as the deck caved under the carver of the figurehead on the ship. The avenging ship claimed Mr. Teale, alias Wulsin, for all time.

And if there was poetic justice there, it reached up for its pinnacle in the next moment : Culver raced past me, his face frantic. His trousers were on fire. Just as he moved blindly to the rail, the big mainsail yard crashed down on him. I saw it strike him a killing blow just before I made the leap. I thought of De Loach, wondering how he would view this end, realizing as I did so that he, great man that he was, had never wished for anything like this. Then I dived, and the waters of Balimbing Bay closed over me, cold and burning. It was the Rajah of Mataram who helped me into a boat.

I STOOD on the beach where everyone was gathered in silence. My arm was about Harriet, whose face showed pain in the baleful orange light. I wondered about Boll as I gazed at the burning ship. Surely he had jumped with the rest of the crew.

The *Gerrymander* evoked long memories. She was every inch a thoroughbred, her every plank, spar, rope, and block a champion. With a soul to inspire winds up in her trembling white towers, and musical notes as the breezes strummed her rigging, she was too young to die.

Now she lit up the sky of the sequestered bay, her fires dancing up into the sky, reflecting against the close peak of Langar, her burning hulk mirrored in the sea, lively and bright. I said huskily, drawing Harriet's understanding eye : " She's a victory won only to be lost to

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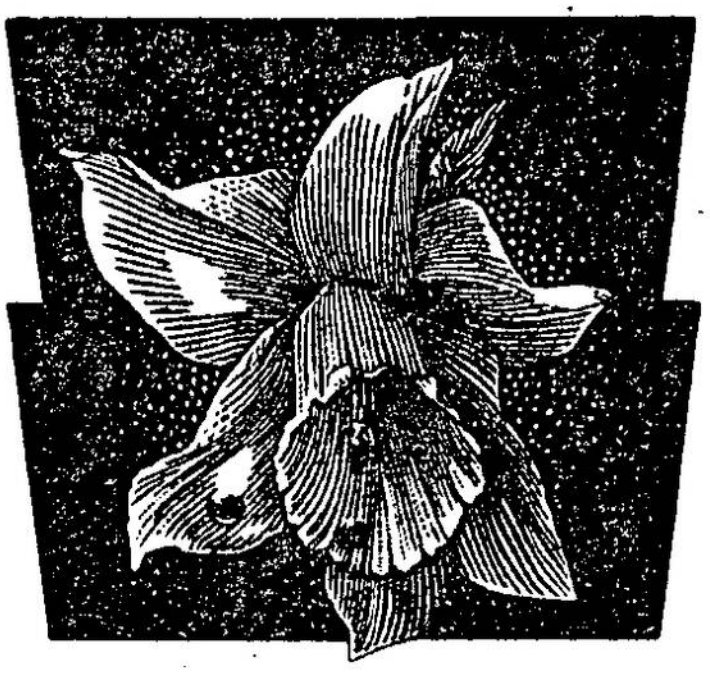

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us. But she is a lady, no matter what they say."

A voice beside me answered, "You're damn right she is, sir." It was Chess. I put my arm about him and drew him close. We would clean his vocabulary later.

The fire had gutted her aft; the stern post fell sizzling, and the hull burned forward of the ship to the foremast. The big steel mizzenmast leaned like a giant of the forest into the red water, the furled sail on its crosstrees burning like grotesque signals to another world. Then Chess cried out:

"Look! Someone is moving at the bows!"

I looked just as Chess shouted, "It's Captain Boll!"

I started. It was Boll, but why was he there? Then I said I was going after him.

"No, Tom. No," Harriet said. "He will surely jump." I sensed more than logic in her words: there was pain, and quick, anxious fear in her tone, eyes, and clutching hands. "Stay with me, Tom."

Boll was busy. I saw him scooping up cash pieces out of the box and dumping them in a boat just under the bow. He kept at it until he seemed spent. Then he faced the fire creeping up to the proud bows of the *Gerrymander* as if he had ample time to take stock of the situation, as if he wished to indulge in some reckless ceremony of farewell. He faced us, his hands on hips, and God knows what in mind. Perhaps he was saying to himself: "The smell of gain is good from any source."

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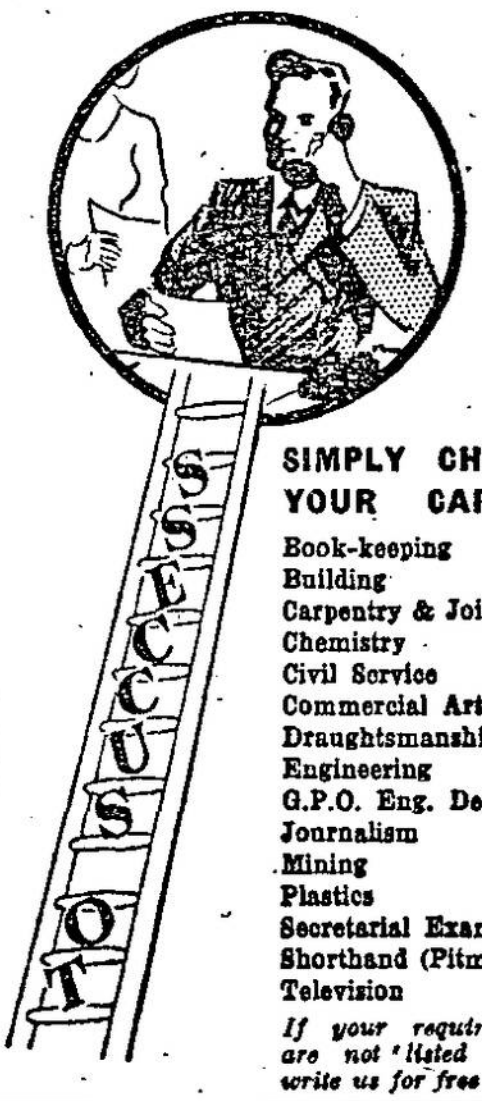

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Then his voice lifted above the fire : " Kim Kim ! "
She was soon swimming to him.

THE stern was under then, sizzling and hissing, and the ship sank slowly, her mid-deck slipping under, her great bows tilting upwards. The deck forward stood at an angle of forty degrees. The " image of Culver," the hideous figurehead, looked farther out over the bay, silent and unconcerned with all the past, the present, or the future.

Then Boll jumped. He was soon in the boat, and helping Kim Kim over the gunwale. Together they stood for a moment locked in each other's arms. And then Boll fell to the oars with slow, timed strokes.

The *Gerrymander* slid slowly under with a hiss and a watery sob. Mr. Teale's carving seemed to come to life. Its wings beat, I thought—as shadows and dancing flames created an illusion of animation—in an effort to soar away from the ignominy of a watery grave. Then it was gone ; it was under.

The *Gerrymander* settled down to the bottom of the sea, to her last, and eternal, anchorage.

THE sea healed over that night after the fire. Harriet held up bravely until I told her about Culver's death. And it was Aunt Emily who responded to Mr. Cott's unctuous request for orders with : " Ask Mr. Flint. He'll be taking over from now on."

And this I did with Amos De Loach's help, and with memories of regret for a tragedy which I had done my utmost to forestall. I built a monument in my mind even to the crafty Rajah, whom the Dutch finally deposed in 1894. And to Robert Culver. I never learned how the fire started, and I never voiced my suspicions. And so it was that time healed all wounds, and Harriet and I, with our youthful problem, Chess, and later with another of our very own, found in Boston, instead of the tropics, our happiness.

There was another memory, another monument in my mind. It was for the living—Boll and Kim Kim.

It was dedicated less to the dominant Boll, Boll the Striker, who worked his way to Batavia and strode boldly into the Dutch Javasche Bank with his cash pieces and redeemed, himself, that one cash piece over. Nor was that memory in salute to a rumour of later years—after he had been banished from the Indies—a rumour woven about a seaman and his lovely lady who were reported to be working a trade coin into riches in the South Sea Islands. No, the memory of which I speak grew out of Boll's departure that night after his ship had gone down :

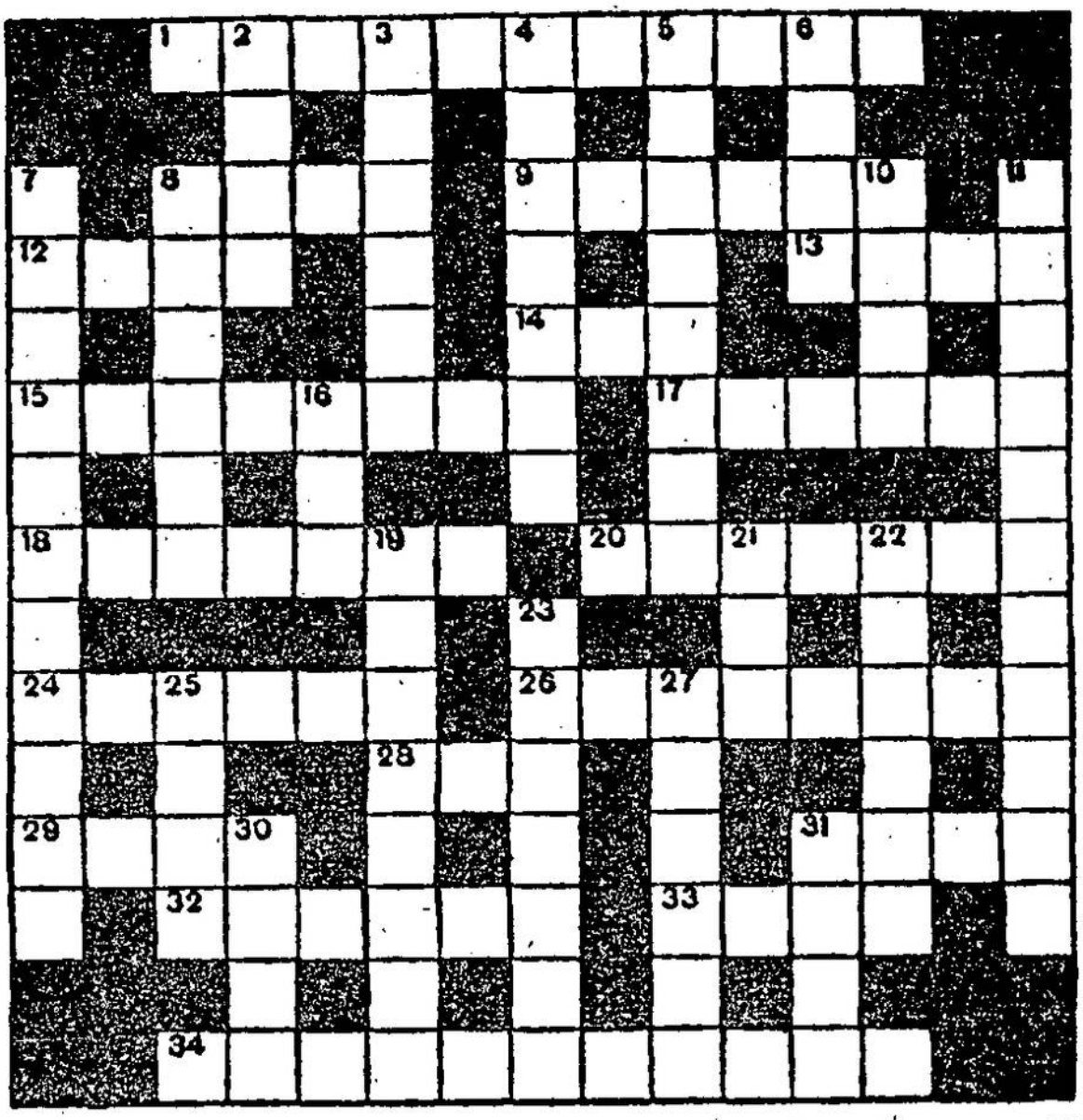
I saw him again as he pulled at the oars. He seemed undecided on his course as he looked at the *Aladdin*, the beach, and the mainland. Then he turned about, and, without a word of farewell, he, Kim Kim, and a boat loaded with treasure and cash pieces disappeared in the dark night towards the sombre coast of Sumatra and new adventures.

I'll always love a good sailor.

THE END

ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 113



CLUES

Across

1 Fly round making changes with hesitation (11).

8 This Shakesperian chieftain sounds like a relation of Will (4).

9 The MacNab changes his profession? (6).

12 Part of the new Health Isolation Board (4).

13 It is often a good thing to give this to your imagination (4).

14 "Falls not the . . . upon the humbled neck But first begs pardon." ("As You Like It") (3).

15 Anything from pearls to the hangman's rope (8).

17 The slightly altered garment often has a piece tacked on the end (6).

18 A Shakesperian creation offers an alternative to earth with nothing attached to it (7).

20 You will have to hit a bin to be able to live (7).

24 Used by anglers or cashiers (6).

26 The blossom swaying as its honey is taken? or part of the robber? (8)

28 This water divides Scotland — with musical sounds? (3).

29 The last you see of that rabbit—or was it a hare? (4).

31 Does it still keep the Irish home fires burning? (4).

32 Town dedicated to Peter and Paul (6).

33 This British politician was no Red obviously (4).

34 What you may do sitting on the grass at a picnic is to be deplored (11).

Down

2 This modern political association was hit for a six (4).

3 Mixed six causing a prolonged sleep (6).

4 Three were royal and one offered his kingdom for a horse! (7).

5 Person of honour or blue blood? (8)

6 Nonsensical king (4).

7 Stall of fish in a cold manner (11).

8 Sultans for a financial change (6).

10 "Still to be . . ., still to be drest. As you were going to a feast." (*Ben Jonson*) (4).

11 If crime is involved a deer-stalker cap and magnifying glass may be needed (11).

16 "Wouldst not play false, And yet wouldst wrongly . . ." (*Macbeth*) (3).

19 No slight misfortune (8).

21 What he has in the game of whist (3).

22 A French island surrounded by water (6).

23 On the level (7).

25 A bit of caviare perhaps (4).

27 Could be this crossword (6).

30 "What never yet was heard in . . . or song, From old or modern bard, in hall or bower." (*Comus*) (4).

31 Are the American teenagers named after him too? (4).

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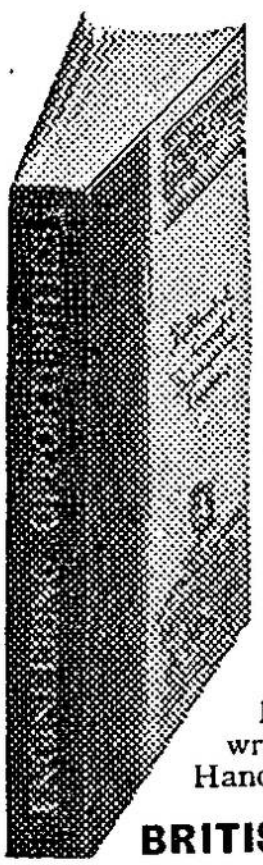

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